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Trump provokes fury after saying Nato troops stayed 'off the front lines' in Afghanistan

'WHAT A BLOODY CHEEK!'



Mourners line the streets of Royal Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire, as bodies of British soldiers killed in Afghanistan are repatriated in 2010; inset, L/Cpl Oliver Dicketts who died on duty



Donald, there are 457 tragic reasons why you are so badly wrong about Britain's war heroes

SEE PAGES 4&5 FOR THE ANGRY REACTION OF FAMILIES WHO LOST LOVED ONES

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THE TRAITORS

Jack, Rachel, Faraaz, Stephen, Jade and James all made it through to start of last night's finale

5 greatest shocks that rocked castle

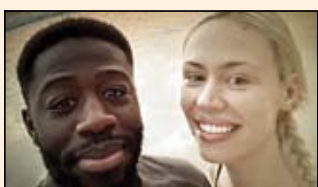
1. The Secret Traitor

For the first time, Claudia picked an anonymous traitor with three named conspirators and had the nation guessing who was in the red cloak. But the secret didn't last long. In the fourth episode Fiona, right, was unmasked as the show's biggest ever mystery.



2. Secret relationships

Viewers found out that Judy and Roxy, below left, were mother and daughter when Judy became the first to be banished. The secret was kept from contestants, though, until Roxy was murdered near the end. Ross and Ellie, below right, were a couple but didn't tell anyone until she was banished days after him.



3. Traitor on Traitor fallout

The secret traitor twist led to Fiona going to war with Rachel soon after they first met as co-conspirators. Fiona accused Rachel of being a liar for saying Amanda had confided in her about being an ex-detective. Fiona insisted Amanda would have told her instead. It led to a dramatic showdown and Fiona was voted off at the next round table.

4. Secret identities

Harriet didn't tell anyone she was an author of psychological thrillers until episode seven - when she was banished. Rachel revealed she's had FBI training, while Amanda and Maz are both ex-police.

5. Team betrayal

Faithful James took a shield behind the backs of his team in a mission, right - causing the prize pot to slide from £10,000 to £3,000. After his eventual confession he was suspected as a traitor.



The final cut

James's tricky exit in explosive climax

BY LAUREN MORRIS

FAITHFUL James was axed at the start of The Traitors final last night, leaving Faraaz, Jack, Jade, Stephen and Traitor Rachel in.

James, 38, a gardener, told the remaining contestants: "It's been amazing, I have learned a lot about myself. I feel strangely serene right now. What a game."

And he could not resist playing a tense trick on the others, saying: "At the first roundtable, and the blind-folds went on, I was selected immediately as...a trait-full... A faithful! Good luck, everyone."

The penultimate episode had ended on a cliffhanger, with both James and head of communications Rachel, 42, receiving the same num-



Host Claudia Winkleman

ber of votes, leaving host Claudia Winkleman reaching for the Chest of Chance to decide who would be banished. In the end, the mum-of-three remained with cyber security con-

sultant and fellow Traitor Stephen, 32, and personal trainer Jack, 29, auditor Faraaz, 22, and student Jade, 25 - all Faithfuls.

And the excitement is not set to end any time soon for the cast - with ex-contestant Paul Gorton warning their lives are about to change forever.

Paul, 38, made it to the penultimate week as a Traitor in the second series in 2024 - won by Harry Clark.

He later appeared on Celebrity Mastermind and The Last Leg and will present a new BBC game show with Vernon Kay this year. Paul said: "You go to the Baftas and have all of these amazing things. It blows my mind. It's like being a single guy who walks into a room of supermodels and everyone fancies him."



Traitor Paul, left, and Harry in series 2 with Claudia



BY CONOR WILSON

FURIOUS relatives of British troops killed in Afghanistan have railed against Donald Trump for diminishing their sacrifice by claiming Nato allies "stayed a little back" from the front line.

They demanded Sir Keir Starmer stand up to the US president over the "ultimate insult".

Some 457 brave British servicemen and women lost their lives in the allied campaign in the wake of the 9/11 attacks on the US.

They included Oliver Dicketts, whose dad Robert said of Trump's words: "What a bloody cheek!"

Prince Harry, who undertook two frontline tours to Afghanistan, said British troops killed in the conflict "deserve to be spoken about truthfully and with respect".

The UK's death toll in Afghanistan was the highest of any country other than the US. In addition, an estimated 2,000 British

Veterans and families slam 'ultimate insult' from president



Should President Trump apologise to veterans of the Afghan war for his insult?

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military and civilian personnel were wounded in action.

Oliver, 27, was killed on operations with the Parachute Regiment in 2006 when the RAF Nimrod plane he was travelling in crashed near Kandahar.

Dad Robert, from Tunbridge Wells, Kent, said: "I think the government should point out the loss of life by British troops and how much they were involved in frontline operations."

"[Trump] is entirely wrong. Not just about British forces, a lot of other Nato forces suffered losses as well and were in frontline positions."

"His lack of knowledge of history generally is appalling and some of the statements he makes beggar belief."

Diane Dernie, whose son Ben Parkinson suffered life-changing

"They stayed a little back, a little off the front lines."

And with these words, a man who himself had managed to avoid being drafted to serve in the Vietnam war insulted those British soldiers, and our Nato allies, who had fought so bravely in Afghanistan.

The President of the United States, as the US Commander-in-Chief, should know better than to insult the servicemen and women of his closest ally.

The President's crass and insulting comments, said with a smirk, have removed what was left of his lustre.

There are few issues that can unite this country across the political divide than to rally against the denigration of those who have served in our Armed Forces and those who diminish their bravery and sacrifice.

I served in Sangin with 3 Rifles Battlegroup on Operation Herrick XI.

The battlegroup sustained the heaviest

COMMENT

BEN OBESE-JECTY

Conservative MP and former Army officer



casualties of any British battlegroup since the Korean War - 30 soldiers lost their lives, a further 170 were injured.

The lie that suggests that those young soldiers avoided serving on the front line is as outrageous as it is disgusting.

The US Marines who replaced British forces in Sangin sustained some of the heaviest casualties of any US forces.

I know many in the US military, who work so closely with us across intelligence and joint operations, will be embarrassed by his comments and certainly won't share his view. The President does them a great disservice.

Though the memory of coffins draped in Union flags being repatriated to the UK

through Royal Wootton Bassett has faded from the nation's collective memory, we must remember those who did not return, and those who bear deep scars, both physical and mental, who need our support and deserve our utmost respect.

I pay tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice, some of whom I knew and many of whom I did not.

We ask young men and women, some of them still teenagers, to close with and kill the enemy through dismounted close combat, to win the fight in those last 100 yards, and that ask comes with a cost.

As a politician, and also a veteran, it is upon us to ensure we never forget their names.

And should any of us ever have to make that fateful decision to commit soldiers to harm's way, to remember above everything else that that decision will come with more names.

injuries in Afghanistan, demanded Sir Keir Starmer confront Trump over his comments.

Her son Ben had both legs amputated, suffered a twisted spine and severe brain damage and is still undergoing major surgeries almost two decades after his Army Land Rover struck a mine near Musa

Qala in 2006. Diane from Doncaster, South Yorks, said the Prime Minister "has got to stand up for his own armed forces, and he's got to absolutely refute what Donald Trump said".

She added: "Call him out. Make a stand for those who fought for this country and for our flag,

because it's just beyond belief. To hear this man say, 'Oh, well, you just fanned about behind the front lines' - it's the ultimate insult."

Ian Sadler's son Trooper Jack Sadler was killed aged 21 by a roadside bomb in 2007, while serving with the 4/73 Special Observation Post Battery, Brigade

Reconnaissance Force. Ian from Exeter, Devon, said: "The British certainly were in the hot spots, they were on the front line."

Sean Binnie was 22 and had been married for just six months when he was shot dead while on patrol with the Black Watch in



Keir Starmer hit back at the US leader

Starmer blasts Trump and calls for apology

KEIR Starmer yesterday condemned Donald Trump's remarks about Nato troops in Afghanistan as "insulting and frankly appalling", and called on him to apologise.

The US president ignited cross-party fury by claiming allied troops "stayed a little off the front lines" in a campaign that claimed 457 British lives.

And the PM responded with his strongest rebuke yet for Mr Trump, saying: "I consider President Trump's remarks to be insulting and frankly appalling and I am not

BY DAVID WILLIAMSON
Chief Political Commentator

surprised they have caused such hurt to the loved ones of those who were killed or injured and, in fact, across the country."

Sir Keir said he had heard and understood the fury of relatives of servicemen and women such as Diane Dernie, whose son Ben Parkinson suffered horrific injuries.

He told her: "What I say to Diane is, if I had misspoken in that way or said those words, I would certainly apologise and I'd apologise to her."

And paying tribute to those killed

and wounded, the Prime Minister added: "We are incredibly proud of our armed forces. Their service and sacrifice will never be forgotten."

Defence minister and former commando Al Carns, who served five tours in Afghanistan and was awarded the Military Cross for gallantry, said Mr Trump's comments were "utterly ridiculous".

He added: "I served five tours in Afghanistan, many alongside my American colleagues. We shed blood, sweat and tears together."

The president's remarks risk putting a new strain on the "special

relationship" between the UK and US, with Britain's party leaders uniting in criticism of them.

The Conservatives' Kemi Badenoch said it was "flat-out nonsense" and "careless talk". She added: "I spoke to parents of young men who had lost their lives in Afghanistan. It is a disgrace to denigrate their memory like that."

Reform UK leader Nigel Farage joined the chorus of rebuke for his friend, saying Mr Trump was "wrong" and added: "For 20 years our armed forces fought bravely alongside America's in Afghanistan."



Oliver's coffin, above; right, his dad Robert; Diane Dernie



Oliver Dicketts lost his life in air crash



Ben Parkinson was badly injured



Helmand Province in May 2009. His mum Janette Binnie, 58, of Crimond in Aberdeenshire, described Mr Trump's comments as "soul-destroying".

She said: "We were all there fighting the same war."

"My son worked alongside some of the Americans. [Trump] has just diminished everything that our children have done."

Coffins

Britain grieved every loss of the Afghanistan war, with so many people lining the streets of Wootton Bassett for repatriation processions that the town was granted royal patronage in 2011.

In June 2010, the families of seven servicemen joined crowds of mourners as their coffins were driven through the Wiltshire town.

Those returned included three Royal Marines from 40 Commando – Sergeant Steven Darbyshire, Lance Corporal Michael Taylor and Marine Paul Warren – and four sol-

diers from 1st Battalion the Mercian Regiment: Lance Corporal David Ramsden, Colour Sergeant Martyn Horton, Private Alex Isaac and Private Douglas Halliday.

Prince Harry, a former Army Air Corps co-pilot gunner, said in a statement: "In 2001, Nato invoked Article 5 for the first – and only – time in history."

"It meant that every allied nation was obliged to stand with the United States in Afghanistan, in pursuit of our shared security. Allies answered that call."

"I served there. I made lifelong friends there. And I lost friends there."

"The United Kingdom alone had 457 service personnel killed. Thousands of lives were

changed forever. Mothers and fathers buried sons and daughters. Children were left without a parent. Families are left carrying the cost."

"Those sacrifices deserve to be spoken about truthfully and with respect, as we all remain united and loyal to the defence of diplomacy and peace."

Other veterans who served in the conflict have also told how they were proud to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with their American comrades.

Liz McConaghy deployed to Afghanistan 10 times, working as a crew member on the Medical Evacuation Response Flights.

She said she would like to show Mr Trump the list of every US service person that she and her comrades risked their lives to save.

She said: "We picked up so

many Americans, we risked our lives to rescue them, for him to say that is really hurtful."

Andrew Fox, a former Parachute Regiment officer who served three tours of Afghanistan including one attached to US Special Forces, said: "My feelings hearing the comments could best be described as shock, anger and betrayal."

Criticised

"I have an American combat infantryman's badge and jump wings so for their commander-in-chief to say what he said is a disgrace."

More than 150,000 British troops served in Afghanistan in the years after the US-led invasion in 2001, forming the largest foreign contingent after the Americans.

After 9/11 in 2001, the then prime minister, Tony Blair, pledged that the UK would "stand shoulder to shoulder" with America. The al-Qaeda attacks led

to Nato's Article 5 being triggered for the first time – and the only time so far.

The article states that an attack on one member is considered an attack on all.

Yet Mr Trump said on Thursday that he was not sure Nato would be there to support US troops if and when requested.

In an interview with Fox News in Davos, Switzerland, he said: "I've always said, will they be there if we ever needed them? That's really the ultimate test. I'm not sure of that. We've never needed them."

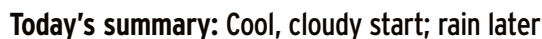
"They'll say they sent some troops to Afghanistan and this or that. And they did. They stayed a little back, off the front lines."

He has previously questioned whether Nato would come to America's defence if the United States were attacked.

He has also been criticised for avoiding being conscripted to fight in Vietnam thanks to being diagnosed with bone spurs in his heels – a claim that has been subject to significant doubt.

Trump made claims on US TV





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Jenrick wants to Farage says it is

EXCLUSIVE

BY **MARTYN BROWN**
Political Editor

Many elderly people are “struggling” because of energy bills, said the MP for Newark, Notts.



JJ ANISIOBI
Daily Expresso host

In Westminster terms, it already made him an anomaly. Most MPs won't brave a coffee queue without three aides and a lanyard.

Fast-forward to this week and Jenrick turns up for his Daily Expresso chat with me in exactly

the same way: no security, just a lone aide and a polite handshake.

The only obvious differences are that he's slimmer, has upgraded his haircut and is now a Reform UK MP.

I've met more politicians than I care to remember, and I've developed a fairly reliable internal

'There are lots of older people who find the last years of their life tough'

Both Labour and the Conservatives have said they are committed to it. But Mr Farage, speaking on Thursday, said the measure is up for discussion. He

added: "My main target of cuts is excessive welfare spending. I get the argument of the triple lock [being too dear], it's something we'll come to over time. You can't blame young people for being pretty cheesed off, because they can't even aspire to have the thing their parents or grandparents have, and that's a real problem." The

Express has campaigned tirelessly to keep the triple lock.

The Office for Budget Responsibility says it has pushed up the spending on the state pension by £12 billion a year, compared to if it had been raised in line with average earnings.

The UK's ageing population means this is likely to rise significantly from

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OVER PROTECTING PENSIONS

keep triple lock as
'up for discussion'

Pictures: JONATHAN BUCKMASTER



JJ chats
to Robert
Jenrick
following
the MP's
switch to
Reform UK

b*****t detector. Given enough time, whether over a drink or under studio lights, the mask always slips.

You see who's winging it and who actually believes what they're saying.

With Jenrick, one quality jumps out: he is unbothered by whether you like him or not. In an era where politics is increasingly a popularity contest, that is almost radical.

He says what he thinks, backs what he believes, and accepts the consequences. That bluntness means he's perfectly happy to upset people.

He talks about Suella Braverman, for example, and practically beams. She was sacked twice by two PMs in just over a year, yet Jenrick openly says he'd happily work with her again.

His answers on illegal migration won't win him applause in Islington.

Ordering the navy to patrol our seas will strike some as excessive. Jenrick shrugs and calls it realism.

Agree or disagree, this is what he thinks. Take it or leave it.

Even on personal matters, he's refreshingly unguarded. He admits

using Ozempic to kick-start his weight loss. None of it seems to bother him.

He is, after all, a man who walked away from a party he once believed in as it no longer aligned with his principles. Love him or loathe him, Robert Jenrick is not pretending. And in modern politics, that alone makes him worth paying attention to.

the 2050s. Dennis Reed, of campaigners Silver Voices, said: "Nigel Farage is flirting with dynamite by calling the future of the triple lock into question."

"The votes of the large number of pensioners who support Reform UK cannot be taken for granted. Lazy support for the anti-pensioner lobby would see his lead in the polls slide

dramatically." Tory leader Kemi Badenoch has said she does not want to scrap the measure "now", but said "let's see what mess Labour leaves for us". Shadow Chancellor Sir Mel Stride vowed the Conservatives will "stand by" it, but other prominent Tory MPs have criticised the policy.

OPINION: PAGE 14

Nigel Farage may tackle the triple lock 'over time'



Number of Channel migrants soared last year

'Bring in Navy and scrap ECHR to cut migrants'

EXCLUSIVE

BY MARTYN BROWN Political Editor

NAVY vessels could be deployed in the Channel to stop small-boat crossings under a Reform UK government, Robert Jenrick has said.

It is "inconceivable" to think that the party won't stop illegal migration, he added.

The ex-immigration minister, who defected to Nigel Farage's party last week, vowed that a Reform government would cut all immigration - both legal and illegal - to "zero or lower".

His remarks, on our weekday news show the Daily Expresso, come after over 41,000 illegal migrants arrived on small boats last year.

On Reform's migration policy, Mr Jenrick said: "We've been very clear, we're going to have a legally binding cap. We're going to set it as low as possible, net zero or lower."

He added: "You should be prepared that if you don't have the right to live here, you should either leave before there is a Reform government or you are going to be deported from this country. I think that's perfectly fair."

Deported

On small boats, Mr Jenrick said Reform would "do what's necessary... That means scrapping the ECHR, the outdated human rights laws, bringing those back to our own parliament, ensuring that this merry-go-round of legal appeals comes to an end.

"You'll be detained. You'll be deported back home to your own country or to a third country. And, frankly, if you need to do more than that, you know, put the Navy in the Channel, whatever it might be, we'll do it."

Small-boat crossings have surged since Labour came to power 18 months ago.

In November, Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood announced "the most significant changes to our asylum system in modern times".

They included successful asylum applicants having only temporary leave to remain, an asylum seeker's family being limited to parents and children, and judges prioritising public safety and immigration control over human rights.

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MEGHAN CAN WIN



Harry wants to bring Meghan and their two children to the UK

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EXCLUSIVE

BY CARLY DUFFY DEPUTY SHOWBIZ EDITOR and EMILY FERGUSON ROYAL EDITOR

PRINCE Harry is said to be more determined than ever to make amends with his father after spending four days in London this week.

A source close to Harry says he has plans to return to the UK in the summer, and hopes to spend time with the King.

The Duke of Sussex, who was at the High Court in London this week for his case against Associated Newspapers Limited, is keen to return to his homeland more often.

Trips have been planned for July and August, the source said, with the hope that the ongoing review into his right to taxpayer-funded UK security will make it safe to bring wife Meghan and their children Prince Archie, six, and Princess Lilibet, four.

The source told this newspaper: "There have been talks when Harry was here previously, he said he wants to come home but he has to make sure it is a safe place for his wife and his family. Meghan has issues about security and serious concerns about some really nasty trolls."

Harry lost a battle with the Home Office last May, failing to overturn a decision to remove his automatic right to 24-hour armed police security when he visits the UK.

But after he sent a personal plea to the Home Secretary, a risk management board is reassessing his security level and will make recommendations accordingly.

A decision is expected within weeks, with some reports suggesting it is already "nailed on", with police security set to be reinstated.

Protection

However, the Home Office insisted no one can say with any certainty what decision will be made.

The source said that Harry's heart "will always be with the UK".

The prince is expected to return in July for the One Year To Go ceremony for the 2027 Birmingham Invictus Games.

No official announcement has yet been made about Harry's attendance, but he has gone to every countdown ceremony since he founded the games in 2014.

Protection remains a huge issue for Harry, who has previously cited this as a major barrier to bringing his family to the UK.

After losing his security battle last year, he told the BBC: "I can't see a world in which I'd bring my wife and children to the UK at this point."

This remains his position, with a separate source noting that "he has always been clear that he cannot see how he can bring his family to the UK unless proper security measures are in place".

Another hurdle is the ill will towards the Duchess of Sussex in Britain, though Harry is sure she could win back the public. If the security situation changes, Meghan plans to join him here this summer, an insider has said.

The prince hopes Brits will warm to Meghan so she can join him in charitable engagements here. Meghan has not returned since attending the 2022 funeral of Queen Elizabeth II, and has no great wish to because she feels ill treated by the press and public. But she knows this is Harry's home and

Harry wants to reconcile with his father



EXPRESS EXTRA



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Harry was at the High Court this week



Harry 'hoping to spend time with the King'

wants to support his bid to rebuild part of his life here.

Last September, Harry returned to conduct a string of public engagements reminiscent of his time as a senior working royal, and he wants to continue supporting his few remaining patronages in this way with his wife by his side.

The insider added that the couple believe Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor's public fall from grace at the end of last year has paved the way for their return. They said that is why Harry has been thrashing out plans to visit the UK more often.

"With Andrew and everything going on, it's the perfect timing for them," the source said. "It's a very carefully thought-out plan."

The source, who knows Harry well, claims that the duke and duchess

have plans to attend a private Royal Family event in July, with a separate meeting with the King at a later date.

They refused to give further details, and with no obvious big birthday, anniversary or event in the diary, it is difficult to know what they could be referring to.

Rebuilding

Buckingham Palace denied any plans were in place for the King to meet Harry, with a source adding: "I'd be astonished if they met [this summer]." Even Harry's team was sceptical, denying that any discussions had taken place.

But when this was put to the source, they said the prince had been making arrangements himself.

No announcements are expected

until at least spring, as Harry focuses on his nine-week case against ANL.

The source said Harry was "doing what he needs to do", but would like to start rebuilding bridges in the UK.

In London this week Harry did not meet with any member of the Royal Family. It is understood the King wants to keep his distance from his ongoing litigation. When Harry was here last September he spent 55 minutes with his father over a private tea at Clarence House.

After years of launching attacks from his home in California, Harry is ready to down swords and reconcile with the King, who is still receiving treatment for an undisclosed cancer.

In May, Harry told the BBC: "There's no point continuing to fight any more, life is precious."

OPINION: PAGE 14

Charles hopes his environmental legacy will live on after he 'shuffles off this mortal coil'

BY JEN PHARO

KING Charles has spoken about the environmental legacy he hopes will continue after his death in a rare intimate interview.

Already known for his heartfelt work highlighting green issues, the monarch has gone into detail about what he does personally, from planting trees to growing rare vegetables.

He spoke about his passions and what drives him, shared childhood reminiscences, reflected on being mocked for talking to his plants - and revealed the secret behind a favourite meal.

And he made poignant remarks about his own death, even giving thanks to God that he has lived so long.

Charles, 77, was interviewed for the Prime Video documentary Finding Harmony: A King's Vision.

In it, he speaks of his fears for declining wildlife, including the cuckoos and grasshoppers he used to hear on his own estates.

The King, who has been having cancer treatment for almost two years, says: "By the time I shuffle off this mortal coil there might be a little more awareness of the need to bring things back together again."

Sustainability

And while walking through trees in the gardens at Highgrove and thinking about how long he has lived, he says: "The beeches I planted right at the beginning. It's unbelievable how much they've grown. I thought I'd never live to see... the fact that I have is praise be to the Lord, frankly."

Narrated by Kate Winslet, the 90-minute film explains his vision of sustainability...working with nature, not against it.

The King says: "The underlying principles behind what I call harmony, I think, we need to follow if we are going to somehow ensure that this poor old planet can support so many."

Charles, who embraced organic farming 40 years ago, and created sustainable communities, was widely ridiculed in the 1980s when he admitted he talked to his flowers because "they respond".

Addressing that mockery, he says: "All this sort of thing was

considered completely bonkers to say the least."

Since he was little, Charles has loved the countryside. The film includes home videos of him being buried on the beach with a young Princess Anne, leading ponies through meadows, clambering over rocks and fishing with Prince Philip.

The King says: "I've always adored being outside and as I got older I took more and more of an interest and I loved going out and exploring. So for me it's an essential part of life to have that connection with the world outside."

His gardens and the animals and insects that thrive there sustain his mental health, he reveals. Showing a soft spot for birds, he says: "There is something irresistible about a swift swooping and that incredible cry they make, the speed they go at."

"For me swallows, swifts and house martins are absolutely critical. If they didn't come back each year I'd literally fall into despair."

Growing up, Charles was close to his grandma, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, and spent long days in her garden at the Royal Lodge at Windsor - later taken over and soon to be vacated by his brother Andrew.

Charles says: "My grandmother was a remarkable person. She had the most wonderful mischievous sense of everything. She encouraged me to look at things, observe. It is fascinating the life that goes on at a microscopic level."

Viewers will see him feeding his chickens at Highgrove, with its Cluckingham Palace hen house. On his estates the King has ensured the survival of rare breeds of vegetables to increase genetic diversity and fight vulnerability to disease.

Also, he wants a good jacket spud. He says: "Half of the battle is to find the right varieties. If you want to have decent baked potatoes, which I love, then you've got to get crispy skins... The Red Duke of Yorks are very good."

● *Finding Harmony: A King's Vision* is released on Prime Video on Friday, February 6.

Humiliation as PM forced to pull the Chagos bill

Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean



Fears deal violates treaty

SIR Keir Starmer faced fresh humiliation over his Chagos Islands “surrender” last night after he was forced to withdraw the bill.

The legislation was expected to be debated in the House of Lords on Monday but has been delayed over fears that it would violate a 60-year-old treaty with the US enshrining British sovereignty over the Indian Ocean territory.

It comes just days after Donald Trump blasted the government’s plan to hand over the islands to Mauritius as an “act of great stupidity”.

BY **MARTYN BROWN**
Political Editor

Chagos deal but the talks have not been completed. Yesterday morning the Conservatives tabled a motion in the House of Lords calling for the ratification of the treaty to be delayed to allow the talks to conclude to avoid breaching international law.

Legislation underpinning the agreement was expected to return to the Lords on Monday for parliamentary ping pong.

Kemi Badenoch, the Conservative leader, said the deal could not progress while “this issue remains unsolved”.

Weakness

The US president raged on social media that “there is no doubt that China and Russia have noticed this act of total weakness” in the Chagos Islands.

Under the terms of Sir Keir’s deal, the UK will give up the archipelago and pay an annual sum to lease back the Diego Garcia military base, a facility built there in the 1970s that has been used by UK and US forces.

But the Tories had warned the agreement would break a treaty between the UK and the US that dates back to 1966, which asserts Britain’s sovereignty over the islands.

Ministers confirmed in late December that the two nations were engaging in talks about updating the 1966 agreement in light of the new

She said: “Throughout the Chagos debates, Keir Starmer has tried to hide behind the cover of international law, now the Conservatives are exposing that his shameful surrender may be illegal.”

The government has repeatedly insisted that an agreement with Mauritius is needed for security reasons, and would avoid a costly legal battle over the territory.

Shadow Foreign Secretary Dame Priti Patel said: “This is a major victory for everyone standing against Keir Starmer’s disgraceful Chagos surrender.

“The deal, which hands British sovereign territory and £35billion to an ally of China, should be dropped altogether.”

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Pharmacies rationing aspirin amid critical stock shortages

PHARMACIES have warned of widespread shortages of aspirin with some resorting to rationing stocks for patients most in need.

Low-dose aspirin is used to prevent heart attacks and strokes in people with a history of heart disease, kidney disease and diabetes. It is also commonly used to relieve pain and reduce fever and inflammation.

A survey of 540 chemists by the National Pharmacy Association found 86% had been unable to supply aspirin in the week to January 20. Some had paused sales to keep stock, the price

BY **HANNA GEISSLER**

of which has soared, for patients with acute heart conditions.

Supply chain shortages are thought to be behind the crisis.

The government has added aspirin to a list of medicines that cannot be exported.

The NPA is urging ministers to accelerate plans to give them powers to make swaps, such as from tablets to capsules, on prescriptions. Chair Olivier Picard said: “The status quo is not only frustrating for patients, it is also dangerous.”



'I feel positive and renewed'

Emilia poses in green for woman&home

Emilia Fox moves on after her break-up

BY MARK JEFFERIES

SILENT Witness star Emilia Fox says she is looking forward to a fresh start after splitting with her boyfriend and filming yet another series of the hit show.

While her story lines as pathologist Nikki Alexander continue after more than 20 years, the last 12 months have been a time for change off screen with her and TV producer Jonathan Stadlen ending their relationship.

Emilia, 51, says: "Jonathan and I separated last February. I have only the very best of feelings towards him. Relationships are funny. They bring different things in different moments of the partnership, but it doesn't take away from the really wonderful times.

"You might feel emotional about it at one point, but luckily with age, you can accept it as part of life and know how to recover and look after yourself. The end of relationships are always sad but I've been putting into practice things that have made me feel more positive, hopeful and optimistic.

"I was very lucky. I was working on Silent Witness, then away to Rome. That was really helpful. It was a good time to be away.

I had to spend a lot of time in my own company.

"On set, you are surrounded by

lots of people, but then the focus is work. Being on my own in my room by myself, learning lines, I did lock myself away. I feel very positive now, very invigorated and renewed.

"There are no new love interests. I'm just really looking forward to what the future holds. New beginnings."

Ahead of the 29th series of Silent Witness that starts on February 2, Emilia said working on the popular BBC drama and hitting the gym was beneficial after going through the split.

Impulsive

She tells woman&home magazine: "I worked out when I was filming Silent Witness... One of the things I'm most self-conscious about is being too muscly. I think because I carried my cello when I was little and always had really defined, strong muscles!"

She adds: "Having done Silent Witness for the length of time that I have, it looks as though I've played it safe. It's not safe because, within it, I'm asked to do all sorts of things.

"In this series, I did something that was pretty out there, which I can't share in case it spoils the story, but I went for it! I think being impulsive is really important in life."

● The March issue of woman&home is on sale from Thursday.

With her Silent Witness co-stars David Caves and Francesca Mills, and, left, on the cover of woman&home

Emilia broke up with Jonathan last February



Life-extending drug boost for prostate cancer

Prostate cancer is now the UK's most common form of the disease



BY STORM NEWTON

THOUSANDS of men with advanced prostate cancer in England are set to benefit from a life-extending drug that can be taken at home, after it was given the go-ahead for NHS use.

Talazoparib, also known as Talzenna, is made by Pfizer. It is a once-daily pill that has been recommended for people whose cancer has spread by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

It should be taken alongside enzalutamide – another pill, which blocks the effect of the hormone testosterone on prostate cancer cells – and is suitable for patients who cannot have chemotherapy, or cannot tolerate other standard treatments.

The move has been hailed as a “real lifeline” for men with the disease.

Talazoparib works by blocking certain enzymes from repairing damaged DNA in cancer cells, causing them to eventually die.

Trials have shown that people taking the drug with enzalutamide lived almost nine months longer, and also had more time before their cancer became worse. NICE estimates that about 2,400 people in England are eligible for the drug, which is available on the NHS from today.

Helen Knight, director of medicines evaluation at NICE, said: “We are continuing to focus on what matters most to people by recommending this effective treatment that can make a huge difference to the lives of people with advanced prostate

cancer. Talazoparib plus enzalutamide can be taken at home, so provides a convenient and flexible treatment option for people who can't have chemotherapy and are unable to take other medicines.”

The move comes days after new analysis confirmed prostate cancer is now the UK's most common cancer.

Prostate Cancer UK found that 64,425 men were diagnosed with the disease in 2022, compared with 61,640 people with breast cancer, which had previously been the most common form of the disease.

Amy Rylance, assistant director of health improvement at Prostate Cancer UK, said: “When hormone therapy stops working for a man with advanced prostate cancer, who is unable to have chemotherapy, it can be hugely distressing.

“That's why the fact this treatment is now approved is so exciting.”

Health Secretary Wes Streeting said access to the new treatment means “less time spent travelling to hospital, less disruption to daily life, and more NHS appointments freed up”.

He said the government has made a lot of progress on cancer care but added: “There's more to do. That's why our upcoming National Cancer Plan will transform cancer care for generations to come and turn the tide against the UK's biggest killer.”



Drug can extend sufferers' lives

Kinnock is grilled over beefing up NHS mental health support

BY ROBERT FISK

THE Care Minister has come under pressure to spell out how Labour intends to strengthen mental health support for cancer patients after being challenged about the Daily Express campaign on the issue.

Stephen Kinnock was pressed on LBC by host and Sunday Express columnist Nick Ferrari, who cited our front page from January 16 when raising the topic.

The exchange followed a letter sent by us to Health Secretary Wes Streeting ahead of Labour publishing its National Cancer Plan for England on February 4.

Mr Kinnock replied: “I appreciate absolutely how difficult it is in terms

of people who have this diagnosis and their mental health condition but the government is slowly but surely getting on top of this issue and turning it around.”

And asking about the letter, Mr Ferrari said: “Do you support the ideas put forward by some charities?”

Mr Kinnock replied: “I'll absolutely take that on board and take that back to the department.”

The Express Cancer Care Campaign is calling for mental health to be treated as a core consequence of the disease, with appropriate psychological support put in place.



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Lammy: Jury still out on trial rethink

BY JONATHAN WALKER

DAVID Lammy paved the way for a potential climbdown over plans to limit jury trials as he claimed he was open to "a conversation" about the alternatives.

It followed warnings that his proposals, which have sparked fury among some Labour MPs, will fail to cut the backlog in the courts.

The Institute for Government think tank warned that his plan would achieve "relatively minor gains, given the institutional upheaval, political controversy and likely damage to public confidence".

In a BBC interview, Justice Secretary Mr Lammy suggested that he would consider other options.

He said: "Let's have the conversation but I'm pretty clear that, in the end, I want the backlog coming down."

Kirsty Brimelow KC, chairwoman of the Bar Council, urged the government to focus on measures that would actually speed up court proceedings.

Smuggler of people and drugs jailed

BY STANLEY MURPHY-JOHNS

A FATHER caught smuggling people and drugs into the UK has been jailed for 10 years.

Ibrahim Sollaku, 33, was arrested on November 5 after arranging for a taxi to take five men from Bruges in Belgium to be loaded on to a lorry bound for England.

A search of his home found 90 street deals' worth of cocaine, and notes about drug supply.

Last month he admitted conspiracy to assist unlawful immigration and possession with intent to supply class-A drugs.

Albanian national Sollaku, of Southampton, Hants, was yesterday jailed for seven and a half years for people-smuggling and two and a half years for intent to supply class-A drugs, to run consecutively.

Anja Hohmeyer, of the Crown Prosecution Service, said: "Sollaku could have chosen to get a job and make a life for himself and his young family but he has thrown that all away."

A-LISTERS AT ICON'S FUNERAL



Fellow designer Donatella Versace, former Vogue editor Dame Anna Wintour and actress Anne Hathaway arrive for Valentino's funeral. Inset, the legendary Italian

World of fashion bids farewell to Valentino

LIZ Hurley, Anne Hathaway and Dame Anna Wintour were among the A-list mourners as stars of fashion and film paid their final farewell to iconic designer Valentino.

Known as the "The Last Emperor" of style, the flamboyant Italian died, aged 93, on Monday "surrounded by his loved ones" at his home in Rome. Crowds gathered outside the Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels and Martyrs in the Italian capital yesterday for his funeral.

Oscar-winning actress Hathaway, 43, wore a black Valentino coat with a ruffled trim at the collar and hem for the service.

She met Valentino – real name Valentino Garavani – on the set of

BY STEPHEN BEECH

her hit 2006 film *The Devil Wears Prada* in which the designer made a cameo appearance as himself during a Paris Fashion Week scene.

Hurley, 60, was accompanied by her son Damian, 23, who wore a scarf in

"Valentino red" – the designer's signature shade.

They were joined by some of the fashion industry's most powerful figures, including designers Donatella

Versace, 70, and Tom Ford, 64, plus former Vogue editor-in-chief Dame Anna, 76, who is now global chief content officer for publishing house and media giant Conde Nast.

Valentino's business partner Giancarlo Giammetti, who gave a tribute during the service, arrived with Bruce Hoeksema, Valentino's partner since the 1980s.

Many guests wore dark sunglasses while some carried bags bearing the familiar "V" logo as well-wishers

lined the streets outside. Valentino dressed Princess Diana and former US First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy.

Hollywood actresses Jessica Lange, Sophia Loren, Julia Roberts and Cate Blanchett all collected their Oscars wearing Valentino gowns.

He was also a favourite of fashionista celebrities including Lady Victoria Beckham and Kim Kardashian during his 60-year career.

Thousands of people queued to pass the Italian's wooden coffin at the label's Rome headquarters in the 48 hours before the funeral.

The casket arrived at the basilica surrounded by white roses and lilies and was carried inside to the accompaniment of music by Mozart.



Coffin arrives at the basilica in Rome



Liz Hurley accompanied by her son Damian



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British troops deserve an apology from Trump

BRTAIN'S special relationship with the USA has often been tested but has always endured. Donald Trump, however, is pushing it to its very limit. In a TV interview he claimed British troops "stayed a little back, a little off the front lines" in Afghanistan.

The UK lost 457 service personnel and many more were horrifically injured in the conflict.

Britain was there from the very start of the operation and remained with the US until the end two decades later.

Trump also said he was "not sure" if Nato, the military alliance of western nations, would be "there for us if we gave them the call".

The president has seemingly forgotten the one and only time that Article 5 of the group's founding treaty – which treats an attack on one as an attack on all – was invoked was shortly after the 9/11 terror outrage in 2001.

Trump's casual dismissal of the sacrifice made by British troops has not only caused hurt and fury, it raises serious questions about the country's relationship with our closest ally.

Robert Dicketts, whose son Oliver, 27, was killed while serving with the Parachute Regiment in Afghanistan, speaks for his son and the nation in denouncing Trump's words.

At the very least, the president is showing massive ignorance or, more likely, stupidity.

He owes this nation and the brave troops who fought for the safety of his citizens as well as our own a big apology.

Lock provides security

YET again the future of the triple lock is called into question, this time by Nigel Farage. The Reform UK leader says the guarantee of a minimum 2.5% rise annually in the state pension is "up for discussion".

Mr Farage is rightly putting time and effort into ensuring his party is ready for government when the next general election is called.

But we would urge him to listen to the assessment of big-name recruit Robert Jenrick, who told us it had been his long-standing view that the triple lock should remain in place to ensure older people have dignity and security.

The lock has become an easy target in the scramble to balance the nation's books but that does not mean it is the right one.

We have a ballooning welfare system, high rates of young people out of work and a stagnating economy. Whoever is in charge must spend their time fixing the basics and boosting growth, not grabbing cash from pensioners who do not have the option to go out and find extra work to make ends meet.

One thing that politicians of any stripe should never doubt is that we will always fight to protect the triple lock.

Build bridges, Harry

PRINCE HARRY has told friends he wants to return to the UK in the summer and hopes to spend time with his father. It is welcome news that, after years of mud-slinging, Harry is keen to find a way to heal relations.

But the hurt caused by the constant revelations and accusations from his camp will not be easily forgotten.

Perhaps the best steps Harry could take towards securing a reconciliation would be a period away from the spotlight, focusing on building bridges in private.

China visit leaves Sir Keir vulnerable to Labour plotters



The Prime Minister is due to fly to China next week, leaving his MPs free to plot

KEIR Starmer loves grandstanding on the world stage but an expected trip to China next week will leave his MPs back home free to plot. Manchester mayor Andy Burnham's "will he, won't he" soap opera saga is reaching its conclusion thanks to an upcoming by-election in his own backyard. It's decision time for the "King of the North" – seize this opportunity to get back into Parliament ready to take a tilt at the top job or forever hold his peace.

There will never be a better chance. He is popular in Greater Manchester and the local elections in May are likely to be devastating for Starmer.

You miss all of the shots you don't take and bottling it now will harm his reputation, perhaps irrevocably. But as the fabulous Carole Malone points out on the page opposite, Burnham's backbone is not always ramrod straight and there is a good chance he will duck his chance.

The Gorton and Denton seat now up for grabs after Andrew Gwynne – booted out of Labour for sending unsavoury messages – announced he is quitting is traditionally rock solid Red.

But there is no such thing as a safe seat in these volatile times and Reform will be relentless in their pursuit of such a symbolic win.

ON THE Left, the Greens and George Galloway are hopeful of sweeping up former Labour voters unhappy with Starmer over his response to Gaza. Losing the by-election would be an utter humiliation for Burnham but also a major blow for Starmer.

If a seemingly popular Labour mayor cannot win a seat in his own patch because the Labour government is so hated, then it reflects badly on the Prime Minister too.

For Starmer, the only good



Sam Lister

Deputy Editor

option is if Burnham quickly rules out putting himself forward, and his team is throwing everything at persuading the mayor to sit this one out.

If Burnham decides to go for it, every outcome highlights just how weak the PM is and could ultimately lead to his downfall.

Starmer's allies are planning to block the mayor from ever making it on to the candidate's list if he does decide to run.

Labour's ruling NEC is dominated by Starmer loyalists, yes, surprisingly, there are still a few of those left. They are briefing that there is "zero" chance of Burnham making it through the selection process.

As a mayor with policing powers, Burnham must seek permission to stand for parliament under Labour's rulebook.

To make it through the laborious process that follows with panels stacked against him he would need the support of the unions or some big names in

the party to kick up a stink about the "stitch up".

Labour MP Karl Turner said it would be a "catastrophic mistake" if the NEC stopped Burnham from running. But given Starmer and his acolytes are happily denying millions of people a vote in the local elections in May in areas likely to back Reform, is it really any surprise they want to manipulate the system to keep down any threat within their own party?

It shows the PM is so weak that allowing an experienced former Cabinet minister back into the parliamentary party is such a threat to his own premiership he has to essentially fix the vote.

But it would boost Burnham's popularity in the party by turning him into a martyr. If Burnham is allowed to go ahead and he fights the seat and wins, he then has a clear shot at Starmer's job. If he is blocked

and Labour loses the by-election, it will be claimed that it could have remained Red if only Burnham had been allowed to run.

Starmer will face constant questions about Burnham unless the mayor quickly rules himself out.

Heading to China next week will give him little relief. Instead, it is likely to make it worse.

WHILE the Prime Minister will want to focus on international affairs, the press pack will continue to quiz him on his potential challenger. By virtue of geography, it won't be a quick trip, which gives bored backbenchers plenty of time to scheme.

Deputy Prime Minister David Lammy urged Burnham not to "rock the boat" by moving against Starmer, warning it would lead to an early general election. But the Prime Minister would be grateful for only choppy waters. He is in a plastic canoe, thrashed about by crashing waves.

Fixing the rules to stop Burnham will not help calm the sea, it will only push him into the eye of the storm.

'There is no such thing as a safe seat in these volatile times'

Carole Malone

FUN, FEISTY AND FEARLESS

Email me at carole.malone@reachplc.com • Follow me on Twitter @thecarolemalone

Andy's a mare for the PM

ONE IN four children start primary school without being able to use the loo or feed themselves. And according to a new survey, 50% of parents don't think it's their job to teach them. Who are these idiot parents and why did they ever think they were fit to have children? Of course it's their job. It sure as hell isn't the teachers', who are having to spend hours every day changing nappies when they should be educating kiddies. Why bring children into the world if you're too damn lazy to prepare them for life?



THIS is Rupert Matthews, police commissioner for Leicestershire and Rutland, who allegedly asked a female police officer to help organise a photo shoot of him on horseback - like that infamous shot of Putin.

So many questions here, the major one why is someone who wants to model himself on a murdering tyrant running a police force?

LIZ HURLEY told the High Court this week she was persuaded to sue a tabloid newspaper over privacy because Hugh Grant used "puppy dog" eyes to convince her. Not sure the judge will think the pleading eyes of a rom-com actor are a good enough reason for a damages claim.

PRUE LEITH has said she's leaving Bake Off after nine years. "I'm 86 for goodness sake." Well, I'll miss her but clearly not the Bake Off "source" who sounded beyond gleeful that Nigella Lawson would be stepping into Prue's colourful shoes: "Prue has been wonderful, but Nigella's recognised worldwide and she'll be a sure-fire hit." Sounds like a case of out with the (very) old and in with the bright, sexy new.

WHEN Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy was asked if a Reform government would be "fascist", she said: "If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it usually is a duck." So, what would Ms Nandy call a government that cancels elections?



We can't bear it, Amanda

AMANDA Holden says she once cooked the Sunday roast naked in front of her family because it was a hot day. Now we all know Amanda loves showing off her perfect body. Her Insta account is testament to that.

But really? Naked while cooking Sunday lunch for her kids? It's enough to have put them off their Yorkshire pudding.

THE HEADLINE screamed: "Does Andy Burnham Have the Bottle?" Never mind what the question is, the answer's a big fat NO. Because Andy Burnham doesn't have bottle. Period!

It's why he'd make a terrible Prime Minister - even worse than Starmer if that's possible. The question of course was, does he have the bottle to stand for the Greater Manchester seat MP Andrew Gwynne is vacating which would allow him back into Parliament to launch a leadership bid against our deadbeat PM?

But don't forget Burnham has stood for the Labour leadership twice before and both times was rejected - because he simply wasn't good enough. He's a decent enough bloke but, just like Starmer, he's lacklustre, he's cowardly and he isn't a leader - which is why being Manchester Mayor has been perfect for him. He's a big fish in a small pond but he's not politically centre stage and the job doesn't require him to be all fire and brimstone. In short - it's an easy political life with generous perks.

The question is, is he prepared to chance all that on the prize of Downing Street? I suspect he desperately wants to - why else stand twice for the party leadership? - but the reason he still won't say whether he's going to go for it is because he's unsure and scared - and we don't want another scared, unsure PM.

But even to get back into Parliament, Burnham first needs to get through the tough selection process to be a candi-

date, where he'll be interviewed by among other Starmer acolytes. Then he needs to actually win the by-election. And if he loses that seat to Reform, he'll have lost everything.

There are rumours Labour's National Executive Committee could block his bid and I'm betting Burnham hopes they do, then he won't have to make the decision. He can say: "I really wanted the job - but they wouldn't let me." And he can go back to being King of the North on his six-figure salary (plus expenses).

We must pray that happens because Burnham is not the man to rescue this hopeless, shambolic, indecisive government. Or this country. He's Starmer 2.0. And don't forget this is the man who wants higher taxes, higher spending and higher borrowing - everything that's made this current government detested more than any other!

THE HYPOCRITE Keir Starmer stood at the Cenotaph this year and laid a wreath in honour of our fallen soldiers. Yet this week his shabby government has scrapped protections against civil actions for Northern Ireland veterans - giving the green light for them to be hounded and prosecuted literally to the death.

What a betrayal of those brave soldiers who risked their lives for this country.

Is it any wonder army recruitment is on the floor when soldiers can be prosecuted for following orders. The real traitors here aren't our soldiers but this contemptible government!

Why is it up to the Government to ban social media for under-16s? What happened to parents saying no?

AFTER the CPS said Lucy Letby, currently serving 15 life sentences for murder and attempted murder, wouldn't face new charges over the deaths of nine more babies, her barrister Mark McDonald said: "Ninety nine per cent of the people I defend are guilty, but I've looked into Lucy Letby's eyes, and I know she didn't do it."

Two things. First, presumably, he must have told various courts that these "guilty" people he was defending were innocent so why should we believe him when he says Letby is. Second, you'd think a seasoned barrister might use evidence to determine someone's innocence or guilt - not a deep searching look into their eyes?

MUD SLINGING'S AN OWN GOAL FOR THE BECKHAMS WHO SIMPLY NEED TO GIVE BROOKLYN TIME AND SPACE

I'VE WRITTEN acres about the Posh and Becks v the Peltz-Beckhams war this week but to recap - I think there's much truth in what Brooklyn, who until now I thought was a spoiled nepo brat, says about Brand Beckham being everything.

It rings true when he says his family value public promotion and endorsements above all else and that until now "my parents have controlled narratives in the press about our family".

But the question that keeps being asked is

this - should Posh and Becks hit back? Hell, they've been hitting back since Brooklyn first became estranged from them.

And that's been the problem. They've used their pet journalists in the media to tell us how devastated they are, and they've put out pleading messages to their son whilst subtly demonising the wife he adores - suggesting she's the root of all the problems.

They even call Brooklyn "The Hostage" - another dig at Nicola (and they have an unprintable nickname for her too). They are

also constantly posting family shots which make clear there's one important person missing. So, let's not pretend they've not been doing exactly what their son has accused them of - manipulating the media.

And they're STILL doing it. Everything Brooklyn said this week has been refuted in detail - and do we think that happened without their input?

Like so much else the Beckhams do on social media, the row with their son has been a campaign - but this time it's backfired

and Brooklyn has just said "enough" which is why he let rip. So, yes, while there are two sides to every story, let's not pretend it's just an ungrateful Brooklyn and his wife at fault here. And if Posh and Becks want their son back, they need to do what he asks - and give him space to get on with his life. He's not part of Brand Beckham anymore and they need to accept that.

And if his new life and his marriage do blow up in his face THAT'S when they need to be there - to comfort NOT to control.



BY LAUREN MORRIS

BRIDE Nicola Peltz Beckham was left crying after singer Marc Anthony called in-law Victoria the most beautiful woman in the room not her, claims the wedding's DJ.

Revealing what he witnessed at the nuptials of Nicola and Brooklyn Beckham in 2022, DJ Fat Tony said: "Marc Anthony was performing on stage, he then called Brooklyn on to the stage.

"Everyone is expecting Nicola to go up and do the first dance and then Marc asks the most beautiful woman in the room to come to the stage. Then he said: 'Victoria, come to the stage'.

"At that point, Brooklyn is devastated because he thought he was going to do his first dance with his wife. Nicola leaves the room crying her eyes out."

Fat Tony spoke up after 26-year-old Brooklyn made nuclear claims this week.

Hips

David and Victoria's estranged eldest son said his mum had "danced very inappropriately on me" and he was humiliated.

Giving more details yesterday on ITV's This Morning, the DJ said of Victoria's dancing: "Why I said it was inappropriate as well, [was] because it was the timing.

"What happened was Marc says, 'Put your hands on your mother's hips'. It was a Latin thing and that whole situation was awkward for everyone in the room."

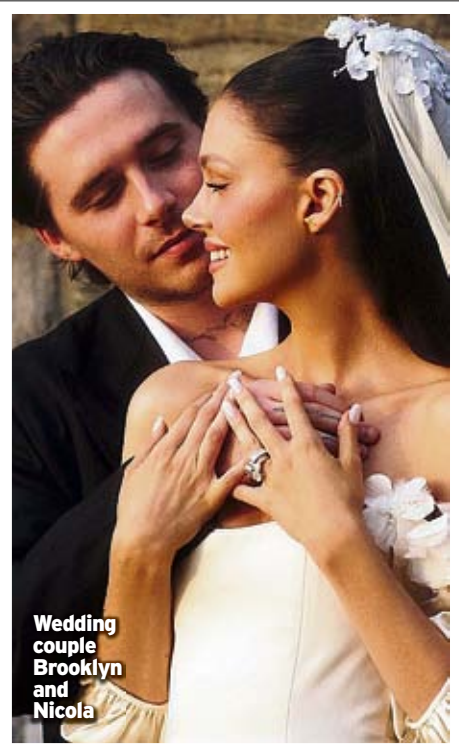
He added: "Victoria was thrown into that situation, and I think too much has been read into it. The dance is a very small part of the bigger problem."

Fat Tony said he thought Brooklyn spoke out to "change the narrative".

Victoria and David reportedly unfollowed the DJ on social media after he posted a meme parodying her dancing.

The Beckhams and Marc Anthony were approached for comment.

'Victoria's name was called out, not Nicola's'



Wedding couple Brooklyn and Nicola



Dancing at Christmas with youngest son Cruz, main. Above, DJ Fat Tony and, below, David with Marc Anthony



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Shabana Mahmood will act

Mahmood in crackdown over failing police forces

BY JONATHAN WALKER

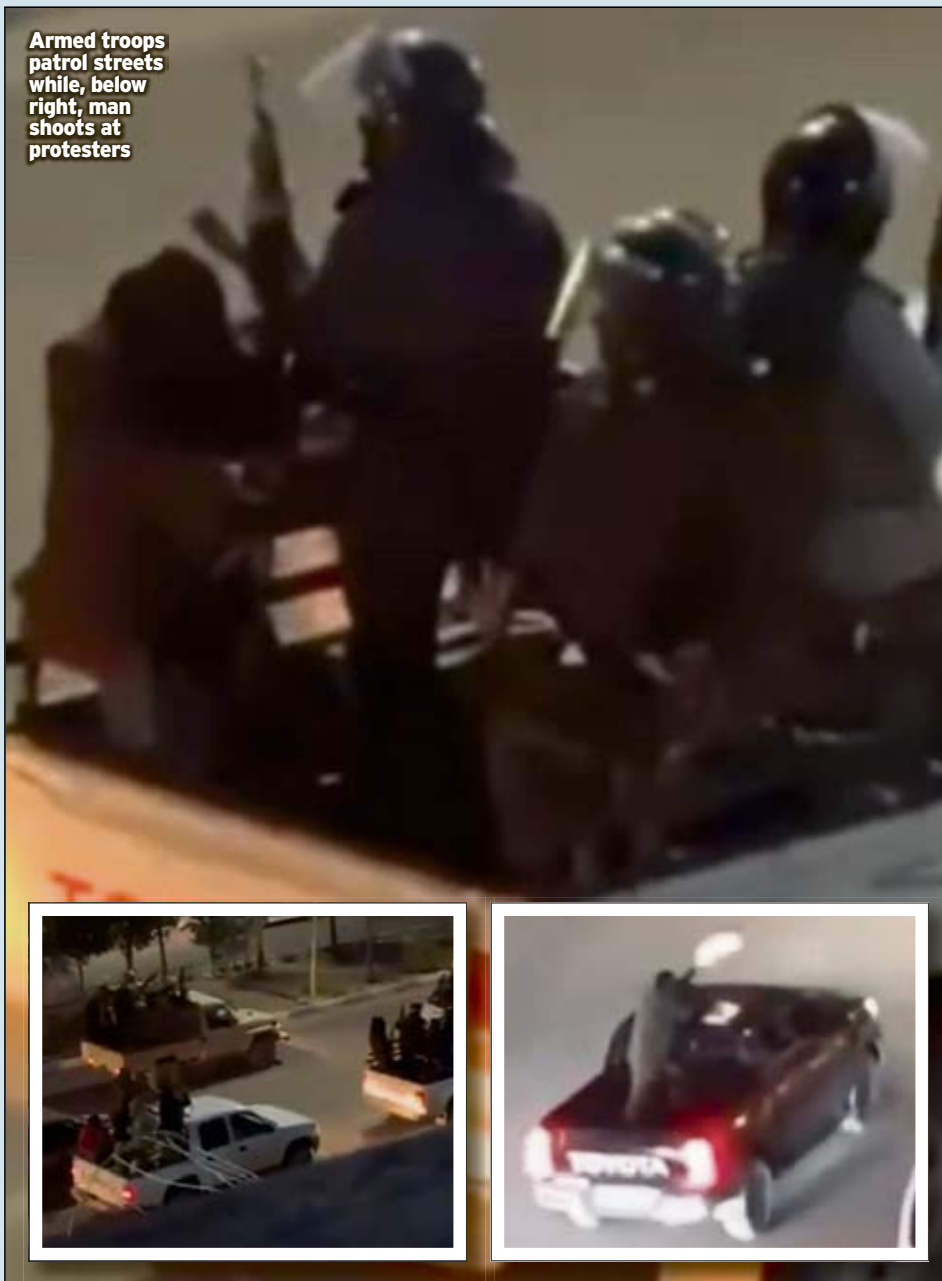
HOME Secretary Shabana Mahmood has ordered a crackdown on failing police forces in a bid to rebuild shattered public confidence.

Hit squads will be sent into forces that fail to meet tough targets, while a new grading system will allow the public to see how police across the country are performing.

The Home Secretary will also restore the power to sack failing Chief Constables.

New laws will hand Ministers statutory powers to force the retirement, resignation or suspension of poorly performing top brass.

It follows a row over a ban on Israeli football fans attending a match in Birmingham based on false data provided



Armed troops patrol streets while, below right, man shoots at protesters

Over 5,000 dead in Iran's brutal protests purge

IRANIAN forces appear to open fire on protesters as part of a brutal crackdown that has claimed more than 5,000 lives.

In videos seen by the Daily Express, truckloads of heavily armed men, some in riot gear and military fatigues, are seen marauding through the streets.

The BBC Persian network reports images have shown masked security forces with Russian-made Dushka heavy weapons mounted on 4X4s, ordering civilians to stay in.

In other images shared on exiled Iranian TV channels, protesters can be seen running for their lives amid the sound of gunfire at a night-time protest.

A source told the Daily Express the videos are genuine.

Footage also shows a man in the back of a black Toyota 4X4 firing down a residential street towards a crowd.

RAF warplanes have been

EXCLUSIVE

BY RICHARD ASHMORE

deployed to the Middle East "for defensive purposes", the Ministry of Defence has said, as the West considers a response to the murderous rampage.

A massive military build-up

is under way in Qatar, with a US carrier strike group and missile-armed destroyers also entering the region.

US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency said the death toll from the crackdown had reached at least 5,002, including 43 children.

The group said 26,800 people had

been detained in a widening arrest campaign by the regime.

US President Donald Trump claimed he had halted the execution of some 800 of those arrested but Iran's top prosecutor dismissed this claim as "completely false".



Protesters flee in terror amid gunfire



Chief Craig Guildford retired

by police. The chief constable of West Mids Police, Craig Guildford, then announced his retirement.

Concerns were raised over recruitment after Sarah Everard was raped and murdered by serving Met officer Wayne Couzens in 2021.

A review published this month found two serial rapists were among more than 130 Met officers and staff wrongly hired or allowed to keep working as vetting was relaxed in a recruitment drive.

Ms Mahmood said: "I will make police forces accountable to parliament – driving up standards."

If crime solving rates or police response times are poor, the Home Secretary will be able to send in experts from the best performing forces to improve their statistics.

Russia in talks with US and Ukraine for 1st time

Zelensky voices hope negotiations bring war's end closer

BY STEPHEN BEECH

RUSSIA joined Ukraine and the US for direct trilateral peace talks for the first time as the fourth anniversary of the Kremlin's full invasion approaches.

Negotiators representing the three nations met in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky said the talks are "a step, hopefully, towards ending the war".

He confirmed the meetings, which are expected to continue today, would focus on the status of Ukraine's disputed eastern Donbas region.

Mr Zelensky told the World Economic Forum in Davos on Thursday that he had reached an agreement with Donald Trump on future US security guarantees for Ukraine in the event of a deal.

And speaking before the talks began, the US president said he believed Putin and Mr Zelensky "both want to make a deal".

The Russian leader met Mr Trump's envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared



Kushner on Thursday night for talks described as "frank" by the Kremlin.

But territory – particularly around the Donbas – remains the key sticking point in negotiations.

Russia has been advancing slowly through the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, also known as the Donbas.

Putin's forces occupy most of Luhansk and large parts of Donetsk, but have suffered heavy casualties. It

would take Russia until August 2027 to conquer the rest of Donetsk, according to the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War.

Mr Zelensky has consistently said he won't leave Donbas to Russia, claiming Moscow could use it as a springboard for future attacks.

US negotiators have proposed that Ukraine's industrial heartland in Donbas be a demilitarised and free

US envoys Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff meet Russian leader Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Thursday ahead of the trilateral talks in Abu Dhabi

economic zone in exchange for security guarantees for Kyiv.

But Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia will not back down from its demand that Ukrainian forces leave the Donbas. He said: "This is a very important condition."

Meanwhile, No10 responded yesterday to Mr Zelensky's criticism of his European allies during his speech in Davos. He accused them of inaction and dragging their feet when it came to defence and security.

A Downing Street spokesperson said: "As the fourth anniversary of the invasion approaches we understand and share Mr Zelensky's frustration.

"Europe needs to step up on defence and security.

"The key protagonist is Putin, who could end the war immediately."

But as talks continued so did the fighting, with a five-year-old boy among four people killed by a drone strike yesterday in a residential area in the village of Cherkaske in the Kramatorsk region.

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Brooklyn's just burnt his bridges

J DID YOUR toes curl as ferociously as mine did when you read Brooklyn Beckham's soul-shrivelling attack on his parents, Posh and Becks?

I'd kept my distance from this family quarrel. Until now.

To be honest, I didn't really care that much and anyway, a bit of fraughtness can crop up in the best-run families.

I had thought that the months of speculative headlines and social media posts since Brooklyn declined to attend his dad's 50th birthday bash were... well, purely par for the course.

A high-profile family in the internet age. Had a bit of a row. Bound to be a bit of scandal-lite sensation and garish gossip online. Comes with the territory. And the wealth. It'll all blow over.

But dear Gawd!

In a lengthy Instagram post this week, 26-year-old Brooklyn pulled no punches. It was truly excruciating. Most toe-curling of all was his account of his wedding day to billionaire's

daughter Nicola Peltz. He said that he has "never felt

more uncomfortable and humiliated". Why? Because of his mother, Victoria. Brooklyn said she "hijacked" the traditional first dance with his wife at their wedding reception.

It "had been planned weeks in advance to a romantic song.

"She [Victoria] danced very inappropriately on me in front of everyone. I've never felt more uncomfortable or humiliated in my entire life."

Aargh! If this is true (and there's been no denial from the parents) what was Victoria THINKING?

This was the bride's moment, not the groom's mother's!

Brooklyn alleged that this was just one example of a lifetime of "controlling" behaviour by Posh and Becks. "My family values public promotion and endorsement above all else. Brand Beckham comes first. Family 'love' is decided by how much you post on social media." He said, in effect, he's now well out of it and never wants to see them again.

I hope he doesn't mean that - or will come to reassess things. We

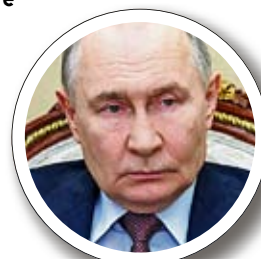
don't pick our parents.

But they ARE our parents, and the reason that we're alive. However Brooklyn's parents may have behaved, permanent estrangement is a terrible, terrible punishment.



R JUST how big a threat to western Europe is Russia? I mean, really? Putin's attempt to defeat Ukraine has now been going on for longer than it took Stalin to crush Hitler. And rather than great sweeping campaigns across half of Russia and into Germany's heartland, Putin's forces have barely advanced more than 30 miles from where they launched their ill-advised "special military operation", or invasion, in February 2022. Thirty miles! It's more than a thousand from the gates of Moscow, where Hitler's advance was halted, to the Fuhrer's bunker in Berlin.

Today, Russian combat troops are about as far from their starting point as London is from Southend. So should we be seriously worried that Putin's ragged divisions could imperiously roll across Poland, Germany, France, and the Benelux countries? Let alone cross the Channel and trouble us here? I'm not suggesting complacency. Just a sense of proportion.



Richard & Judy

BRITAIN'S BEST-LOVED HUSBAND AND WIFE TEAM REFLECT ON THE WEEK'S EVENTS EVERY SATURDAY IN YOUR DAILY EXPRESS

Trump teaches us a history lesson

RTHIS is where wishful thinking gets you. Sooner or later, standing under the cold shower of reality, Britain's wishful thinking about its own defence goes back 80 years or more. Ever since America came to Europe's rescue – foot-draggingly reluctantly, it must be said – in the war against Hitler. In 1941, Churchill wrote in his diary that he'd had his first decent night's sleep since 1939, after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

Hitler suicidally declared war against America the following day, and Washington was suddenly off the fence of neutrality and in the thick of it with us. Which is why, from that moment, victory was assured. And Winston knew it.

We've expected the US to come to our rescue ever since. We've certainly expected them to pick up the lion's share of the bill for guaranteeing Europe's security, largely against what used to be a hostile Soviet Union and is now Putin's expansionist Russia.

So we bilked on the bill. Shamelessly, like a bar-room grifter who always somehow manages to swerve paying for a round, and grins sheepishly when he's called out on it. Before doing it again. And again.

JSOME things you just don't want to know. I truly wish Blue Peter veteran Peter Purves hadn't taken it upon himself to confessing to "adoring" saintly co-host Valerie Singleton back in the days when they broadcast live to 16 million children on two shows a week.

Purves was opening up on BBC Radio 3's Private Passions. Thankfully, he declined to go the into the actual details of what transpired after he and Singleton, below, enjoyed clinky drinks together.

A tryst of some kind, it seems.

Still, there were no obvious consequences. Neither had to say a year or so later: "Here's one we made earlier."



Troops on standby over Greenland, inset, Trump



And again. Not to mention allowing our armed forces to wither and shrink. Back in 1982, we had a navy big enough to sail halfway around the world and retake the Falklands.

Attempting such an operation would be laughable today. Our warships could fit into the bath and all our warplanes could hang comfortably from the box-room ceiling. Troops? Halved in number since 1990. They'd fit into the toybox in the corner.

President Trump has called us out on all that freeloading and miserable under-spending. The wishful thinking days – decades of lazy assumption that Uncle Sam would always be picking up the tab – are gone forever.

If it's been a brutal wake-up, well, it was always going to be. Some of us have been warning of this for years. The UK and Europe have given Donald Trump the perfect excuse to demand ownership of Greenland. If we couldn't be bothered to spend 5p on Greenland's protection, why should we expect America to step in?

For citizens of a distant Denmark?

Trump now expects a newly, robustly US-defended Greenland to march to the sound of the Stars and Stripes. I think he's wrong, but I don't really blame him. Because boy, have we had this coming.

We may not like it. We may hate the way he's doing it. We may despise his bizarre fits of pique – haranguing Norway's prime minister for not awarding him the Nobel Peace Prize; abusing our own PM (and after all that tireless blowing of smoke too!) as being "stupid" over the previously Trump-approved Chagos Islands handback, and yesterday's vile calumny on our brave troops in Afghanistan.

But it's what eventually happens when you don't pay your own way. He who pays the piper calls the tune. Wishful thinking to assume anything else.

RMEMO to whoever is responsible for the BBC's DSJ (Department for Self-Justification). STOP IT! Just STOP with these awful, self-aggrandising radio and TV trails and promotions, praising yourselves to the skies. They're beyond embarrassing. Beyond tolerance. They're so self-satisfied they could have been directly adapted from a Donald Trump speech!

Each one closes with the unctuous, patronising payoff: "It's OUR BBC." Er... no, it's not. It's YOUR BBC, guys, which WE have to pay for – by law. One trailer even closes by "thanking" us licence-fee payers. Stuff your "thanks", BBC! We don't have a choice, do we?

PLEASE ZIR, CAN WE HAVE PRONOUNS WITHOUT AGENDA

JA NURSE faced the sack for a few worrying days after calling a male transgender paedophile "Mr." Jennifer Melle, 40, dared to speak publicly about being disciplined for "misgendering" and for a while it looked like she was for the high jump. That threat's gone away now. The entire ballyhoo transpired at a

hospital in Surrey. What a pity Ms Melle doesn't work in Wandsworth.

The Labour-run council there could have helped her stay on the right track. Staff at Wandsworth have been told to "announce their pronouns" at the start of meetings, but urged to choose "gender neutral versions" such as ze/zir/zem.

Ze. Zir. Zem. Have you ever, in all

your entire days, heard these "pronouns" spoken? Or (until now) seen them written down? If you had, would you have the faintest idea what they meant? Nope, me neither.

Hackney Council has long warned staff against starting letters with "Sir" or "Madam". Perhaps they'd prefer: "Oi, you!" Marginally less confusing than "ze/zir/zem".

ROK, I'LL say it one more time. Alex Jones. For

Strictly. (Hosting, not competing – she did that in 2011 and made it all the way to the semi-finals with professional partner James Jordan). Alex has put in the miles on BBC1's The One Show (she replaced Christine Lampard all of 15 years ago, believe it or not). She's warm, funny, and according to those who know the off-screen Alex well, has a mischievous sense of humour which The One Show format doesn't present that many opportunities to reveal. In other words, she's a shoo-in to host the show. Come on, BBC. It's a box waiting to be ticked. We'd all cheer.

Britain 'paying the price for years of foolish energy policy'



FAMILIES and businesses are "paying the price for years of foolish policy" in the pursuit of net zero, former Energy Secretary Claire Coutinho has warned.

Britain is "decades into a folly of our own making", she said, adding: "Things must change before it is too late."

The Tory shadow minister berated Labour's Energy Secretary Ed Miliband for having "doubled down on a renewables-based system which involves building more and more capacity, much of which will sit idle for huge swathes of time".

She added: "This means a higher-cost, less productive energy system which delivers less value for billpayers."

Slamming the race to net zero, she even criticised her own party's record.

She said: "Since the mid-2000s, the British people have been promised a swiftly delivered green energy sector built on solar and wind power that would create

BY DAVID WILLIAMSON
Chief Political Commentator

hundreds of thousands of jobs and reduce our carbon emissions and energy bills at the same time. The trouble is, it was too good to be true – certainly in the way that it was attempted by parties of all stripes, including my own."

She accused the state of "exerting ever more power in pursuit of climate targets which have done little to reduce global emissions but inflicted significant damage to prosperity".

But she claimed that, as Energy Secretary in the final year of the last Conservative government, she initiated a "reset", pushing back "bans and mandates that would have imposed huge costs" on bills.

But Reform UK deputy



leader Richard Tice dismissed this claim as "laughable". He said: "Her government created the very energy crisis she now complains about. Their green policies pushed up bills, damaged British industries like steel, and left us less secure."

"Reform UK will scrap net zero and will fast-track licences for North Sea oil and gas to cut bills and restore growth. People must never forget nor forgive the damage forced on people by net stupid zero."

Ms Coutinho made her comments in the foreword to a report from the Prosperity Institute, which recommends axing the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

The Department said: "The only way to bring down energy bills and deliver energy security is by making Britain a clean energy superpower [with] clean, homegrown power that we control."

MPs demand plan from Labour to fix insulation debacle

BY DAVID WILLIAMSON

THE Serious Fraud Office should be called in to investigate a "catastrophic fiasco" that has left more than 30,000 homes with defective insulation, a cross-party group of MPs say.

An estimated 98% of external cladding and 29% of internal wall insulation installed in government schemes to tackle fuel poverty is faulty.

MPs on the public accounts committee say "some of the most disadvantaged households" have been left "living in cold, damp or unsafe conditions and experiencing stress, poor mental health and financial costs as they seek repair".

Failure

Chairman Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown added: "I have served on the committee for 12 years. A 98% failure rate in a public-sector initiative amounts to the most catastrophic fiasco I have seen..."

"The sheer levels of non-compliance found here make it clear to us that these matters should be referred to the Serious Fraud Office." The MPs want the government to come up in the next fortnight with "a credible plan for how it will ensure that no household will pay for the repairs".

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero said: "It is categorically untrue there are widespread health and safety risks – for the vast majority it means a home may not be as energy efficient as it should be." Minister for Energy Consumers Martin McCluskey said the government had been clear that "no household should be asked to pay to put things right".

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Catterick training centre

Army base instructors jailed for sex with rookie

BY **ROD MINCHIN**

TWO Army instructors who had sex with a teenage recruit have been jailed and sacked from the military.

L/Sgt Antony Pugh, 36, and Sgt Connor Forgan, 32, formed separate relationships with the 17-year-old, then boasted to each other in lewd messages.

Both had served in Afghanistan and were at the infantry training centre in Catterick, North Yorks, at the time of the offending.

Each denied a charge of sexual activity with a child by a person in a position of trust but were convicted by a court martial in Bulford, Wilts.

Pugh, a dad of two and member of the Grenadier Guards, was jailed for 20 months. Forgan, of the Welsh Guards, got 16 months.

They were put on the sex offenders register for 10 years and dismissed from the Army.

Sentencing them, Assistant Judge Advocate General Jane England said: "You were well aware of where the line was, and you willingly stepped over it for your own sexual interests."

New parents' murder trial

BY **MATTHEW COOPER**

A FIVE-week-old baby died of a "catastrophic" brain injury after repeated assaults by her parents, a murder trial jury heard yesterday.

Darcy-Leigh Jefferson also had 47 rib fractures and breaks to both legs, prosecutors said.

The brain injury was caused by her being "shaken violently or because her head had been struck against a surface", Harpreet Sandhu KC told Stafford crown court.

Sean Jefferson, 35, and Amy Clarke, 34, both deny murdering their baby and causing or allowing her death.

Darcy-Leigh died in hospital on March 29, 2022. The trial continues.

Philip Young admitted 48 charges



Ex-councillor drugged, raped and sexually assaulted wife for 13 years

Four other men deny sex charges

BY **PATRICK HILL**

A FORMER Tory councillor has admitted drugging and raping his then wife over 13 years.

Dad-of-three Philip Young, 49, pleaded guilty to multiple sex offences against his ex Joanne, who waived her right to anonymity and bravely watched in the public gallery.

It took the disgraced business consultant 27 minutes to enter his pleas to the offences. He admitted 48 of the 56 charges against him including 11 counts of rape, four of sexual assault, seven of assault by penetration and 11 of administering a substance with intent.

He also confessed to 14 counts of "voyeurism" and one of publishing obscene material, including non-consensual intimate photographs and videos of his then wife, on at least 500 occasions. Winchester crown court was told the offences, between 2010 and 2023, were all committed against Joanne.

Young, wearing a prison-issue tracksuit, was brought to court from HMP Bullingdon. He denied three charges of making indecent images of children, possessing a prohibited image, and



Joanne faced her ex-husband in court

four of possessing an extreme pornographic image between January 2019 and January 2024. He lowered his eyes as his former wife of more than 20 years entered the court, before sitting stony-faced in the dock while flanked by a prison officer. According

to an online biography, Young graduated with a business studies degree from the University of Westminster in 1998. He later served as a respected Conservative councillor in Swindon, Wilts, between 2007 and 2010, and rose to be a cabinet member for culture, regeneration and economic development.

But in 2010, he announced he was stepping down to spend more time with his family and run his own business.

Speaking to the Swindon Advertiser at the time, he reportedly said: "Trying to juggle all of that, family and work, I don't think it is fair on my family to put them bottom of that priority list."

Young had also featured in the same publication in September 2009 after Joanne went into labour at the family home and he delivered their child. He

has reportedly been involved in multiple consultancy businesses, including several as a director, and has described himself as an "experienced business leader". He is listed as the chief operating officer for a salesforce consultancy firm based in London and has previously worked on projects for household names, including Aston Martin, Unilever, and BP.

He was remanded in custody.

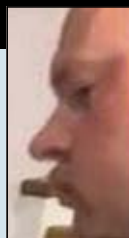
Five other men appeared in court charged with sexual offences against Ms Young, who divorced her husband after his arrest in 2024. She was supported in court by her sister and a member of Witness Support.

Norman Macksoni, of Sharnbrook, Beds, 47, and Richard Wilkins, 61, of Toothill, Wilts, both deny a count of rape. Dean Hamilton, 47, of no fixed address, is yet to plead to the same charge. Connor Sanderson Doyle, 31, of Swindon, Wilts, denied sexual assault by penetration and sexual touching.

Mohammed Hassan, 37, of Swindon, pleaded not guilty to sexual touching. The five men were all bailed to stand trial from October 5.

Speaking after the hearing, Wiltshire Police's Det Supt Geoff Smith paid tribute to Ms Young's "incredible bravery".

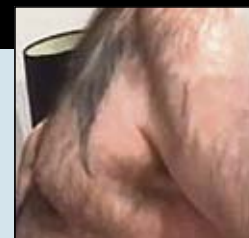
POLICE SEEK TATTOOED MAN



Man sought

DETECTIVES trying to identify a further suspect, wanted over alleged sex offences against Joanne Young, have released images of a bald man taken between April and May 2022. Police

described the suspect as a man of "a large build, hairy, with scarring on the back of his head, prominent lips, short or shaved hair, and a distinctive tattoo on the left of his chest."



Distinctive tattoo

EXCLUSIVE**By James Rampton**

CANCEL culture is the curse of comedy. These days it sometimes seems as if a comedian only has to sneeze in the wrong direction to be cast out into the outer darkness of supermarket openings, daytime TV shows and shopping channels.

But speaking exclusively to the Express, the popular, veteran comic and actor Griff Rhys Jones is delighted to announce that cancellation has never been a problem for him.

The 72-year-old, who starred in such classic shows as *Not the Nine O'Clock News* and *Alas, Smith and Jones*, says he's never been troubled by the bane of cancel culture. "Funnily enough, I haven't," he muses.

"People always say to me when I'm on tour, 'It must be terrible for you going out on the road. How does the idea of being cancelled and the woke culture and all that affect you? How much do you have to look out for what you say?'"

"And I have to reply, 'Well, it doesn't affect me at all'. I walk out on stage and usually make jokes about the age of the audience because my auditorium is full of people who are in their 70s.

Nothing I say causes them any perplexity of any kind whatsoever!"

During the 80s and 90s, Griff and comedy partner Mel Smith achieved critical and popular acclaim with their sharp wit and deadpan humour. Their trademark head-to-head sketches were a firm fixture of Friday night in millions of homes around the UK and a testament to a golden age of British comedy at its best.

Griff speaks with enduring fondness about his late double-act partner, Mel, who died at the age of 60 in 2013. They never had a row and "loved performing together". According to Griff, "I will look back on the days working with him as some of the funniest times that I have ever spent."

The father of two, who has been happily married to wife Jo Jones for 46 years, continues by expressing gratitude that he is now past the age where cancellation is a clear and present danger.

Never more than a minute away from the next winning laugh, he continues: "I'm rather relieved that my children are 38 and 40 now, and don't sit around the kitchen table upbraiding their poor father. That does happen to friends of mine with younger children. But this is one of the things we passed through as a

family and we just came out the other end. At the age of 25, my children returned to the breakfast table and said, 'We need some money, we need somewhere to live'. Those were the only real problems the older generation had to face!"

The same cannot be said of the latest character Griff is playing, who is very much in the sights of woke warriors. He is taking on the role of Jim Hacker, the hapless fictional former premier, in a new West End play, *I'm Sorry, Prime Minister*.

It is based on the BBC's hugely successful satirical sitcoms, *Yes, Minister* and *Yes, Prime Minister*, which ran for eight years and picked up numerous Baftas during the 1980s. It was the favourite television programme of politicians of all stripes, despite the jokes often being made at their expense.

Margaret Thatcher was even a fan. She enthused that *Yes, Prime Minister*'s "clearly observed portrayal of what goes on in the corridors of power has given me hours of pure joy". Such was the Iron Lady's love for the sitcom, she even performed a sketch in public with the show's two stars, Paul Eddington and Nigel Hawthorne, which she was said to have written herself.

As in the sitcom, the premise of the play is that the slow-witted ex-Prime Minister Jim Hacker (Griff) is constantly being outfoxed by his far wiler former civil servant, Sir Humphrey Appleby (Clive Francis). The humour is set to be sharp as ever as it's written and directed by Jonathan Lynn, who co-wrote the TV series with the late Sir Antony Jay.

We join Jim, who is older but definitely not wiser, in the rarefied universe of Oxbridge, where he is still completely bemused by the real world. Looking forward to a peaceful retirement from government as the Master of Hacker College, Oxford, Jim instead ends up threatened with the ultimate modern disaster: cancellation.

The panicky former premier calls on the help of Sir Humphrey. As always, the ex-Whitehall mandarin takes great delight in bamboozling Jim with his love of bureaucracy, hatred of change, obscure Latin phrases and wilful obstruction.

"He's in trouble because of things he said," explains Griff. "His cancellation is the consequence of a silly joke that he made when he was invited to give a keynote speech at a conference. God knows what the speech was about –

'Nothing I say causes an audience in their 70s any perplexity of any kind whatsoever!'

Alas, Griff Rhys Jones believes today's society is too quick to jump on the perceived failings of others. As he returns to the stage as Jim Hacker, the legendary performer on why we shouldn't take too much notice of social media

My audience is too old to cancel me... thankfully



Yes, Prime Minister stars, from left, Bernard Woolley (Derek Fowlds), Jim Hacker (Paul Eddington) and Sir Humphrey Appleby (Nigel Hawthorne)

Pictures: MICHAEL WHARLEY

Griff called performing with Mel Smith 'some of the funniest times I have spent'



'It's the perfect comedy... the characters start in one place and finish in exactly the same place'



Griff as Jim Hacker with Clive Francis, left, as Sir Humphrey in new show *I'm Sorry, Prime Minister*

we don't ever get to hear it." Things go from bad to worse for Jim. "At one point, he's taken to task for the British colonisation of India," adds Griff. "He says, 'That was nothing to do with me. That was 150 years ago!'"

"But history is now something that is morally alive. There's no objectivity in studying history any more, and I think poor Jim's suffering from that. The whole story here is the old guard finding themselves having to defend themselves against a new guard."

It's a highly topical theme. Griff thinks some people are far too swift to troll others for perceived politically incorrect remarks. These pile-ons can very rapidly become extremely vindictive.

The actor believes that we should all be more forgiving of each other's blunders. After all, it is human to err.

"I am aware that these rows can suddenly and furiously take off," he observes. "But I think people are too quick to jump on other people's lapses."

"As Jim says towards the end of this play: 'It doesn't matter who we are. We can all make mistakes, and those mistakes can become far, far bigger than they need to be'."

Such misunderstandings often stem from the generation gulf, believes Griff.

"The problem with the world at the moment is that the worst moral sin you can have is to fail to accept somebody's selfishness, to accept their identity or the way they feel," he says. "That's the new world that I think us oldies find difficult to take in."

"My generation all came from the world of hard knocks – that's what school was all about. But the thing about young people today is they have a very strong sense of right and wrong. They are all about moral probity." That creates a trap for Jim that he inevitably falls into.

Another very germane subject that *I'm Sorry, Prime Minister* tackles is ageism. "Jim is about the same age as Joe Biden, but from his point of view, there's no particular reason for him to be sidelined."

"The point of the play is that Jim is past his prime. He doesn't want to be told that he's not worthwhile any more because he's reached a certain age."

"We have a thing in this country that at a particular point, you're past it. There comes a time, especially in the cut and thrust of British politics, when you're no longer worthy of note," says Griff.

The original series remains very relevant, conjuring up a timeless political realm in which cunning civil servants run rings round ministers.

"Jonathan and Antony were writing about the inertia that surrounds politics and the difficulty of getting things done."

Some things never change. Look at the recent government U-turn over ID cards.

"You know that somewhere in Whitehall there was a moment when

senior civil servants said, 'I'm sorry, Sir Keir, but you would have to be very courageous indeed to bring this in because we simply don't have the processes, the money or the physical resources to police it'," muses Griff. "And so, the Prime Minister had to go back and reverse the policy."

The series also nailed the British fixation with bureaucracy. I mean, have you ever tried to fill in a tax form?

Griff reflects that we have tried unsuccessfully to move away from our obsession with red tape. "There was lots of talk about getting away from Brussels and all that EU bureaucracy."

"But we ought to be honest and say, have we actually done that? Isn't it time we recognised that we are an incredibly bureaucratic nation? We are addicted to bureaucracy."

He believes that's what is also great about *Yes, Minister*. "It's not like the West Wing, which is about getting things done and people going through emotional crises. *Yes, Minister* is about stasis. It's about keeping things exactly the same. At one point in the play, Jim says to Humphrey, 'You dedicated your career to the idea of nothing changing, didn't you?'"

"It's the perfect recipe for a comedy because the characters start in one place and finish in exactly the same place."

THE ONE element that has made Jim's life infinitely more difficult since the heyday of *Yes, Minister* is social media. Griff is hopeful that its power might be waning, though.

"We must not overrate the importance of social media," he begins. "That will fade because gradually people are recognising that on platforms like X, there is so much froth. Froth froths up, and there's a huge fuss around it."

"That's good for the people who live on social media. They like there to be a froth, and they like it to upset people. But we need to be careful about taking it too seriously to the extent of allowing it to ruin people's lives or stop things happening."

"If I were to make a prediction, it's that we're learning that the internet can be a false god."

But, he adds with that inimitable chuckle, "I hope I'm not wading into trouble here. I'm not here to make the front pages with, 'Griff Rhys Jones says this'. I'm just an old man who wants an easy ride!"

As Jim might ask: will Griff manage to steer clear of cancellation and remain one of our best-loved comedians? Yes, Minister.

● *I'm Sorry, Prime Minister* opens at the Apollo Theatre in London on Friday. For tickets, visit imsorryprimeminister.com



Not *The Nine O'Clock News* turned Mel, Pamela Stephenson, Rowan Atkinson and Griff into superstars

Weight-loss jab treatments are putting users into debt

BY VICKY SHAW

ALMOST 40% of people using private weight-loss injections are putting themselves in debt.

Nearly half of those polled said they had dipped into their savings, spending an average of £210 a month on their treatment.

The average debt racked up was £1,616, the survey for banking app thinkmoney found.

And 21% of patients said if their costs were to increase any further, they would have to stop



Patients pay £210 a month for the jabs

using the jabs. Vix Leyton, a consumer expert at thinkmoney, said: "For people who have spent years trying every diet and programme going, the fear of

regaining weight is a real spectre. If people are forced to stop because they can no longer afford it, there can be physical and emotional consequences.

"That makes it even more important that anyone starting these jabs thinks about whether they can afford the journey, not just the first few months."

The Savanta survey of 1,040 people using the injections also found 17% of them had used money that was set aside for emergencies to pay for them.

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SATURDAY'S BIG READ

JONATHAN WALKER

Whitehall Editor



FOR as long as I can remember, the United States of America has been our friend and ally.

President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher helped to free the world from the tyranny of communism. Bill Clinton and Tony Blair were mates.

George Bush, too, saw the former Labour PM as his staunchest ally abroad and it was to him that the president turned in his first call after the 9/11 terror attacks.

So when the UK stood "shoulder to shoulder" with the US after 9/11 in 2001, it was clearly the right thing to do – because we never doubted America would do the same for us.

There were disagreements, such as when the US infuriated Mrs Thatcher by invading Commonwealth nation Grenada, but nothing that threatened the trans-Atlantic alliance.

Those days may be over. It's clear that Donald Trump is, at best, an unreliable ally. But the awful truth may be much worse than that.

The question worrying Foreign Office mandarins is whether Mr Trump's tenure in the White House represents a temporary blip, with normal service resumed once he's replaced by someone saner, or whether we're witnessing a long-term shift in the way the US deals with the rest of the world.

Outburst

And this includes its friends. Keir Starmer has done his best to keep the "special relationship" alive.

He ensured the UK pulled out all the stops when Mr Trump enjoyed a second state visit last September, hosted by the King at Windsor Castle.

The Prime Minister made the message explicit in his speech welcoming the president, saying: "This relationship is not just about history. It's about the future."

He had the right idea. Partnership with the US is the foundation of the UK's defence and foreign policy, and it is our biggest trading partner (unless we count the entire EU as a single partner).

But it hasn't worked, as we saw this week when Mr Trump threw an extraordinary tantrum in response to plans for the UK, along with European allies, to defend the region known as the High North.

This includes Greenland, part of the Kingdom of Denmark, which Mr Trump wants to buy.

The president announced additional tariffs on goods shipped to the US from nations including the UK. He also attacked Sir Keir over plans to hand sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, calling it "an act of GREAT STUPIDITY".

Mr Trump regards both tariffs and public criticism as a method of punishing those who cross him.

It suggests that all Sir Keir's diplomacy was for naught, because while allies might sometimes disagree, they never behave like this.

Bizarrely, the president's outburst appears to have been prompted by a failure to understand the message from the UK and European partners. They wanted to reassure the White

Disagreements between Keir Starmer and Donald Trump reflect a clear fracture in the UK-US alliance



Staunch allies Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan outside No10 in 1988

House that they take concerns about Greenland's security seriously and are willing to help.

Instead, Mr Trump took it to mean that Europe was threatening military action against the US. The fact that the president could misread the signals so severely suggests he is failing to listen to foreign policy experts in his administration.

In the end, the tariff threat was lifted. Yet the president then chose to insult the UK, and other Nato allies, by suggesting our armed forces failed to contribute to the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan. The reality is that 457 British personnel died.

With any luck, the current chaos in

TARIFFS AND TANTRUMS POINT TO A NEW WORLD ORDER

Picture: JANE BARLOW/PA



Has Trump torpedoed the special relationship?

the White House will go away once Mr Trump is replaced in 2029. But where political ideology is concerned, we appear to be witnessing a long-term shift. There's method to the Trump madness. He's not just motivated by ego. There's a coherent philosophy, which is shared by others in Washington.

The president believes, of course, that the US must be "strong and respected". But he also believes there should be a limit to America's obligations. No longer should the US be the world's policeman.

Instead, it should aim to dominate the western hemisphere, by which he basically means the continents of North and South America.

Hence, the US used its military to intervene in Venezuela earlier



Pals Bill Clinton and Tony Blair in 2002

this month. And the rest of the world is on its own. This was spelt out in the National Security

Strategy published by the White House last November.

It warned: "After the end of the Cold War, American foreign policy elites convinced themselves that permanent American domination of the entire world was in the best interests of our country."

"Yet the affairs of other countries are our concern only if their activities directly threaten our interests."

Explaining his apparent lack of concern about Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Mr Trump explained last year: "We have a big, beautiful ocean as a separation."

It was a typically tactless comment but accurately summed up the new US approach to world affairs. And many Republicans welcome it, regardless of their

feelings about Mr Trump. Stung by the huge cost in lives and dollars of military interventions across the world, they believe it is time to collect the long-awaited "peace dividend" they were promised when the Cold War ended with the defeat of Soviet Communism, 20-odd years ago.

Divide

There is also a political divide. The security strategy paints a sorry picture of Europe as a continent afflicted by economic decline and "civilisational erasure", characterised by falling birth rates and loss of self-confidence.

Although it suggests we could become "great" again if "patriotic

European parties" gain power. If the US needed us, however, it wouldn't care what sort of government we elected. The real problem is that they don't believe they need us any more and no amount of state visits will change that.

It's still possible a future US administration will see the world differently and conclude it does need allies after all. Britain can only hope this happens, because we certainly need America.

But Mr Trump's behaviour is not just down to his erratic personality.

It stems from a view of the world that is shared by others in the US Capitol, who will still be there once Mr Trump retires to spend more time with his golf courses.

The goalden girls of women's football

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'First Lionesses' make a brief appearance in earliest clip from 1917

By Andy Lines

THE footage lasts just 29 seconds but shows the forerunners of today's Lionesses – a women's football team so good that they were nicknamed The Invincibles.

The extraordinary clip of Sterling Ladies has been confirmed as the very first footage of a female game and, according to historian Steve Bolton, it was played during the First World War.

"This does have real historic significance," he said. "We knew that film footage existed but, finally, after years of research I've managed to establish which games are which and can categorically confirm the September 1, 1917, footage is the oldest known to exist."

"And we now know for a fact who the two teams were, the score and the venue."

"The Sterling Ladies really were the first team of female sports media superstars. It's 100 years before the Lionesses became the nation's great heroes."

"But history has forgotten them. It's time their contribution to the war efforts and our country's national sport is recognised."

"It really is an astonishing and unique snapshot of life in the First World War and the incredible role women played."

"The Sterlings shone briefly, but ever so brightly. We should remember them."

Steve says there is footage of four matches played by Sterling, who were based in Dagenham, east

London. It transpired that the first game was filmed by British Pathe and was actually shown in cinemas across the country.

Sterling beat Burton Vowles (shirtmakers) 6-1 at Ilford FC's Gordon Fields.

Steve said: "The film starts with the two captains, Edie Mullet of the Sterlings and Ms Williams of Burton Vowles, who were playing their first game, trying hard in white tops and black skirts."

"The final shot is of the Sterling team relaxing after the game with George Shalders."

"The Sterlings were leading 2-1 at half-time thanks to Ada Fairman





Steve Bolton researched the footage. Left, Sterling Ladies, of East London, were undefeated in the 1917-18 and 1918-19 seasons



and a reply from F Parish. After half-time Violet Foster added a third and then the Dagenham team's 'dashing centre forward', Maud Smith, added two. Edie Mullet finished off the sixth goal with a 'ripping shot'."

STEVE said the game was part of a fete – which also included an athletics competition and musical entertainment – to raise funds for a local war hero who had died at the Somme.

Other footage shows Sterling drawing 2-2 with Vickers Crayford Athletic Club at Southend in April 1918, beating London General Omnibus Co Ladies 11-0 at Ilford the following month and a 2-0 win over Handley Page Ladies at Ilford in April 1919.

The First World War was the first

golden era of women's football. With men away at war and the great shell crisis, working-class women – who had previously only worked in domestic service or certain occupations – were drafted into jobs previously only reserved for men.

This included dangerous and long hours in shell factories, where they became known as the "munitionettes". Exercise was encouraged to increase their fitness, keep them occupied because of worries about morality and as a form of socialising, as many of the young women were working hundreds of miles from home.

Football was a popular pastime, with kickabouts starting during breaks at work, and this soon led to high-profile charity matches.

Games attracted crowds of up to 15,000 with wounded soldiers allowed in free.

Including the 1918-19 war season, more than 1,000 matches were played by over 250 women's teams, raising a fortune for the allied cause.

Women's football continued to be popular after the war.

Teams played friendlies for charities, often in front of large crowds.

However, the FA banned matches at its members' grounds in 1921, saying they were "unsuitable for females". The ban lasted for 50 years.

Steve hopes that more footage of early women's matches will turn up: "Not that long ago some film was actually found stored in a tin can in the national library in Norway. No one had been aware of its existence.

"It's entirely possible there is more footage hidden in a loft somewhere."



Sterling's mascot, Maisie, kicks off a game against the Handley Page Ladies at Ilford. Below, medal documents team's unbeaten run



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Dancers stick with tradition... in the car park

WE ARE

The mid-winter pagan ritual, traditionally held to bless apple trees, is enjoying a revival across rural England. Express reporter **AARON NEWBURY** finds some ribbon sticks and joins a blessing in the unlikeliest of places... a pub car park in London

IF YOU stand at the bar in a London pub on any given evening it's not uncommon to see some strange sights. But standing at Ferry Boat Inn, catching sight of a woman wearing a top hat adorned with black feathers, I feel a wave of relief wash over me. I'm in the right place. Tonight will either be brilliant or absolutely terrible. There's no middle ground when it comes to Morris dancing in a Tottenham car park.

I'm here for the winter pagan ritual of wassailing. It's an evening of revelry traditionally held on the 12th night of Christmas to bless apple trees in the hope of a good future harvest by throwing cider on the roots, and singing and dancing to ward off evil spirits. So popular has it become in recent years, events run throughout January.

Growing up in Dorset, wassailing meant farms, welly boots and people who looked like they had just walked off the set of the Vicar of Dibley. It meant wax jackets, muddy fields and a comforting sense that everyone knew exactly what they were doing and why.

This, on a Saturday in January at a pub in the capital, is categorically not that. Two vans stuffed full of police officers greet me as I exit the train station. As I walk up, dodging cyclists and evening traffic, I'm starting to suspect I may have made a mistake.

Soon I meet Diana and Tony, who run Black Path Morris. They've been doing this for 30 years. One of their members joined three months ago, and in that time they have mastered five dances.

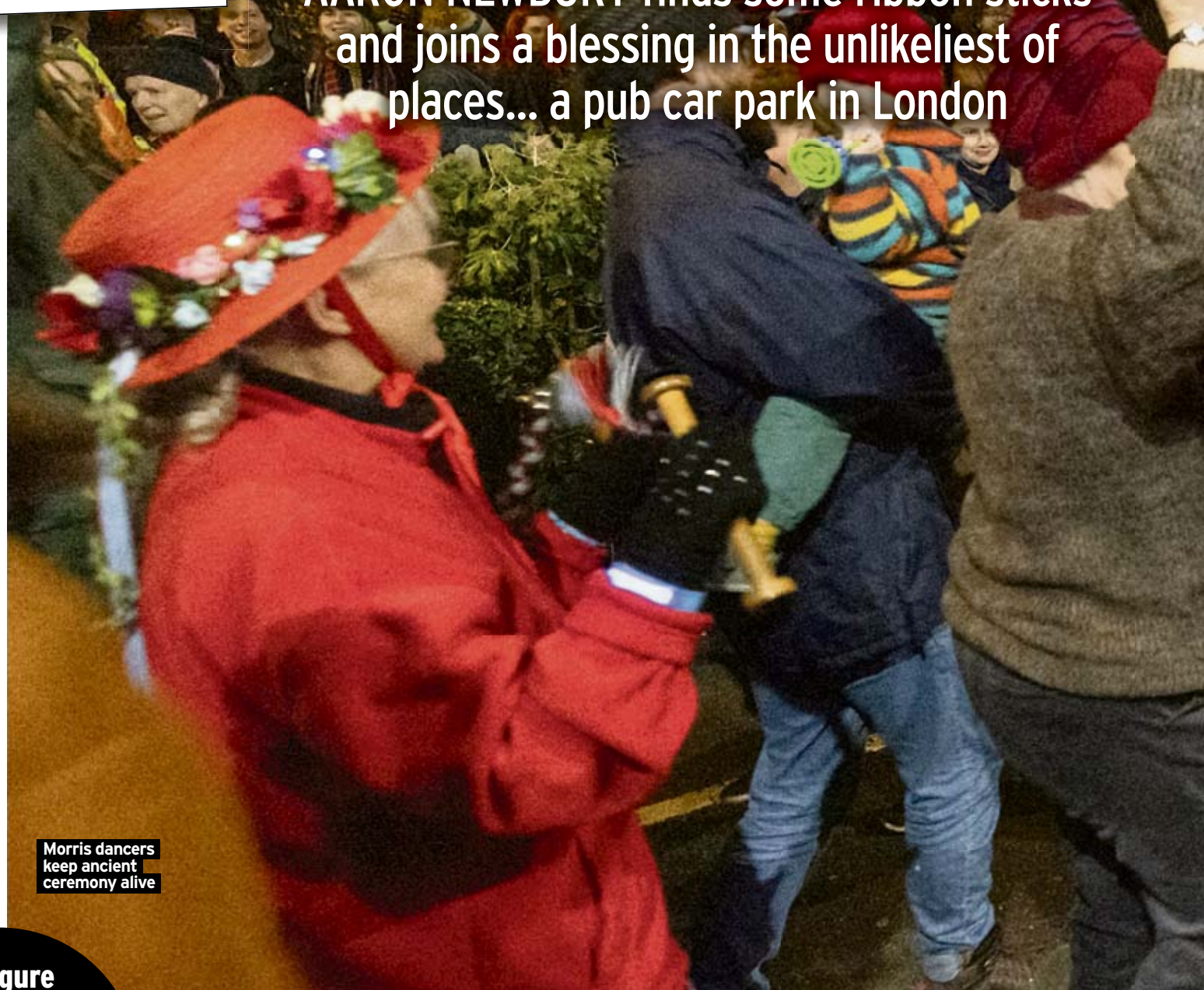
"We just sort of met one day and went from there really," a musician from another group – Black Horse and Standard – tells me. She is holding a fiddle, and her side's getting the beers in.

There are five Morris sides here tonight. Black Horse and Standard, Black Swan, Black Path, Camden Clog and London Pride. The names sound like craft beers, which feels appropriate given our location.

Carol McGuinness from Black Horse is hosting. She's a whirlwind of activity as the event gears up, buzzing this way and that to get everyone into position. As she does so the crowd gathers, and it's not what I expected. Families with children on shoulders mingle with city types nursing glasses of wine. I spot one man in Lycra who has cast off his bike to see what the fuss is about.

Another chap, vaping and holding a craft beer, looks utterly baffled. "What do they do for the rest of the year?" his companion asks.

Nobody answers, because nobody knows, so I make it my mission to find out. Before I can, the first dance begins. The top deck of a passing bus quickly becomes a gallery of



Morris dancers keep ancient ceremony alive

'A figure joins them wearing a deer skull with antlers... I decide not to ask why'

phone cameras. A delivery driver halts his motorbike, films for a bit, then remembers his food is getting cold and scoots off like his life depends on it.

When it ends, the crowd offers polite applause. I must admit, a part of me remains unconvinced.

Then Black Swan arrives. They are swathed in black with paint across their eyes wielding rather menacing looking sticks. A veritable giant of a man, black beard and all, kicks off the dance with a roar that makes one child hide behind his mother. I take shelter behind a parking meter.

Camden Clog follows with wooden boards and an accordion. The contrast is jarring. No shouting, no menacing costumes. Just

rhythmic clogging that somehow calms the entire crowd, children and Express journalists included.

Black Path performs next. "This is a dance about a witch, a very good looking one who ran off with a load of pixies," Tony announces. A child asks if the witch is inside the pub. She does not know. Neither do I and neither, I suspect, does Tony.

A figure joins them wearing a deer skull with antlers. I decide not to ask why, some questions are better left alone.

The dances continue. There are handkerchiefs. More roaring. A hurdy-gurdy appears, sounding exactly as rustic as you would imagine. The dancers roar again, and a plucky child roars back. I remain hidden behind the meter.

London Pride performs Cotswold Morris – white clothes, bells and bowler hats. This

looks like the Morris I remember. There is something comforting about bells and white clothes when you have just witnessed a dancer in a deer skull skipping about the Devil.

I am still not convinced this is for me. It feels too strange, too urban, too far removed from the fields and apple orchards I remember.

BUT THEN they announce the join-in dance. Quickly, I am handed two sticks complete with ribbons and am partnered with a woman who comes every year. "Last year we stayed until the beer ran out," she tells me, as if issuing a challenge.

We get one practice. Carol blows a whistle

WASSAILING



Pictures: TIM MERRY

Express stick man
Aaron may get
a ribbon at workRing-o-rosies...
bagels replaced
toast in apple
tree blessing

and sternly looks at me to take my allotted place. Raise the sticks. Skip. Dance in a circle. Wave the sticks. Skip again. Surely, I can master that?

Then we do it for real, with music, with the professional dancers cheering us on like we are performing at the Royal Albert Hall.

And something clicks. The costumes do not matter. The fact we are in a car park in London does not matter. This is exactly what Morris was back home. Getting involved, having a laugh, keeping something alive that probably would have died out decades ago but refuses to, because people like the crowd here simply will not let it.

I hand my sticks back and mingle. "If I saw them walking up to me on the Tube, I would think the druids had come to town," one man mutters. I am inclined to agree, and I decide that would not be a bad thing. A man

with a hip flask watches on, tapping his feet to the music. Young men wearing woolly hats topped with papier-mâché apples tell me they have been coming for years. Someone is playing splat the rat with a homemade board. If you win, he buys you a drink.

A passing cyclist stops, FaceTimes his dad to show him the spectacle, then pedals off into the night.

By dance 12, children are Morrising along in the crowd unprompted.

When the dancing finishes, I speak to Johnny, the Squire (or boss) of London Pride. "I was pulled in by early folk music. Then my friend invited me to a class at Cecil Sharp House in Camden." This, I learn, is the centre of Morris in the country.

Carol is full of praise for the assembly. Her youngest member is in her 30s, the oldest over 70. "It is enormous fun, it keeps us fit

and it is sociable," she says. "I have been doing it since 1982. People see us out and about and they get interested. Everyone is welcome, just have a go and join in."

Peter Kanssen, 64, the man who spurred me on with the hurdy-gurdy, has been doing this for 35 years.

"My girlfriend at the time invited me along. Got me hooked. It is just good fun. It is all about keeping tradition alive. But if the traditions are boring, nobody would do it. Morris is anything but boring."

Hannah Lisserman, 32, a data engineer, joined because "I wanted a reason to learn how to play the melodeon". She enjoys the "kind of gothic charm".

"I met a lady in the loo who asked me if I was going to a concert," she says. "I told her, I am the concert."

The crowd moves to the beer garden. Chris

Hayes, the landlord, oversees proceedings. He is wearing a hat threaded with branches and leaves. He looks like a tree decided to become a person.

He sings the apple tree wassail song and pours cider on the roots of trees scattered throughout the garden. Then they hang toast to the branches. Except this is Tottenham, so they hang bagels instead.

The old ways meet the new postcode. We cheer, bang pots and move to the next tree. Holly Shelton-Newlove, 29, tells me, smiling: "I have no idea what is going on."

The evening ends with a sing-along in the bar until the beer runs out.

I watch the dancer in the deer skull buying a pint and chatting with the cyclist who stopped 20 minutes ago and never left. A child teaches his father the dance moves whilst his mother films. Regulars who came in expecting a quiet Saturday pint look on with magnificent bemusement.

WALKING back to the station, past the police vans and the estate, I find myself thinking about traditions and how they survive.

Morris dancing should not work in Tottenham. It should require fields and farms and people in wax jackets who know what they are doing. It should not involve deer skulls and craft beer and bagels hanging from trees.

But it does work, precisely because nobody told these people it shouldn't.

They took something old and planted it in a car park. They took the bells and the sticks and the rural charm of it, and they refused to let it die just because the location changed.

Next January, I may be back. Not because I suddenly understand Morris dancing, because I still categorically do not.

But because sometimes the best traditions are the ones that refuse to make sense, that insist on surviving in the most unlikely places, performed by people who simply will not let them go.

And because, if I am being honest, I quite want another go with those ribbon sticks.

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Time running out to settle tax returns

BY VICKY SHAW

MORE than three million people still need to file their tax returns, with around a week to go before the deadline.

HM Revenue and Customs said 8.6 million people have already put in their return for the 2024-25 tax year.

It is urging taxpayers and agents who are yet to file to act now or risk missing the January 31 deadline and face an automatic £100 penalty.

The revenue body said 3.3 million customers still need to file.

People can find help and support at gov.uk.

Myrtle Lloyd, HMRC's chief customer officer, said: "Don't leave it until deadline day. Filing now will give you peace of mind that your tax return is completed and if you have tax to pay, you have a week to arrange payment."

"If you're worried about paying your tax bill, you may be able to set up a payment plan."

This year's deadline falls on a Saturday.

HMRC's phone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm.

Retail sales golden over Christmas

BY HOLLY WILLIAMS

RETAILERS enjoyed a surprise Christmas sales rise, with online jewellery firms booming thanks to strong demand for gold and silver.

The total volume of sales increased by 0.4% in December, defying expectations, said the Office for National Statistics.

But it failed to offset falls of 0.8% and 0.1% in October and November, leaving sales down by 0.3% in the final quarter.

Overall for 2025, sales volumes rose by 1.3%, the most since 2021.

Internet retailers had a 4.4% increase in December. It was the biggest since February and was driven by the sales of gold and silver even as precious metal prices soar.

Gold hit another all-time record high of close to £3,695 an ounce yesterday as investors continued to flock to the "safe haven" asset.

Investec economist Sandra Horsfield said the rises had "encouraged some speculative buying, even by households".



Mum Muria with son Bumi as the rains come to the forests of Borneo, Indonesia

Don't leaf me out in the rain, Mum...

BY DEAN MURRAY

ORANGUTAN mum Muria tries to keep her son dry in a downpour by grabbing a few leaves for shelter.

Little Bumi at least finds some respite from the rain by snuggling in under her arm.

But his mother's makeshift umbrella is no help at all and she gets a thorough soaking.

The pair were filmed in a forest in Borneo, Indonesia, by the local partners of UK-based International Animal Rescue.

The charity said: "The footage shows Muria and her wild-born son, Bumi, sheltering from the rain, with Muria using a leaf to protect them."

Released

"It's a gentle reminder of how intelligent and resourceful orangutans are, and just how similar they are to us."

Muria was rescued by Indonesia's wildlife protection agency and brought to a centre run by IAR's local partners YIARI.

She spent seven years in rehabilitation before being released back into the wild in 2019, and gave birth to Bumi three years later.

IAR said: "Seeing Muria and Bumi safe, healthy and living freely is proof that rescue and rehabilitation truly can protect a species."

Dementia sufferer convicted of not insuring car he can't drive

BY TRISTAN KIRK

A PENSIONER with severe dementia has been convicted in a controversial fast-track court process for not insuring the car he no longer drives.

The 77-year-old stopped using his Peugeot in December 2024 when his condition was first diagnosed.

Court papers show the man is "confused much of the time" and unable to manage his own affairs.

He has no memory of receiving a fine from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency about the uninsured vehicle in August last year.

His brother was alerted to the problem when the DVLA opted to bring a criminal prosecution this month, and he sent a letter to the court about the circumstances behind the unpaid bill.

But his letter was not enough to halt the prosecution, and a magistrate in Derby convicted the man last Thursday of keeping a motor vehicle

Man, 77, caught up in fast-track justice system



Pensioner was no longer using his vehicle

which does not meet insurance requirements. The prosecution was brought under the Single Justice Procedure, the fast-track court process where magistrates sit privately to rapidly deal with low-level criminal

cases. The cost-cutting measure, which began in 2015, means prosecutors such as the DVLA do not see letters from defendants sent to the court.

Chances to withdraw cases that are no longer in the public interest are regularly missed. In the pensioner's case, he was prosecuted for having no car insurance on August 12 last year.

Incapable

The brother told magistrates his ailing sibling, who lives in Middleton, Greater Manchester, did not drive at all in 2025, but wrongly told a doctor he "is still driving".

He wrote: "He is now incapable of managing his affairs to any degree and therefore I have only just become aware of this issue. He has no recollection

of receiving any letters regarding this." The DVLA sent out a fine notice to the pensioner in August, and then prosecuted when it was not paid.

Magistrate Louise Hammond accepted a guilty plea entered on his behalf from the brother, and decided to impose a six-month conditional discharge rather than a fine.

The SJP is being reviewed by the government after complaints of secrecy and evidence that vulnerable people, sick pensioners and hospital patients are being unfairly convicted.

Two years ago the Magistrates' Association said the system needed major reform and said that prosecutors should look at mitigation letters before cases reach court.

The DVLA told ministers last spring it would support that move.

Romance in the bag



LISA was delighted to be handed a sick bag on a TUI flight because the man of her dreams had written his number on it.

Lisa, 58, and Jamie Hobbs, 59, were on separate five-day, £800 TUI breaks to Tenerife and saw each other boarding the plane.

She said: "Waiting to board the plane I kept seeing a good-looking man. He was glancing at me too. Imagine my delight when, mid-flight, Jamie handed me his number - on a TUI sick bag."

They met the next night. Lisa said: "It was love at first sight. I'll never forget that first smooch - there were fireworks. Who doesn't love a package holiday?"

Maintenance company owner Jamie proposed to personal assistant Lisa in September 2021 Bournemouth Airport where their eyes first met. The couple who live in Ferndown, Dorset and wed on a package holiday in Cyprus in 2023, have three grown-up daughters between them.

'The love of my life'



WHEN lawyer Lorraine Warburton agreed to join her friend on a £1,500 two-week TUI package holiday to Cuba for Christmas, she had been single for a decade.

At first when her pal introduced her to a man called David on the plane she was furious.

But now Lorraine, 57, says: "That man would turn out to be the love of my life."

Lorraine and her pal and David, a dispatch manager, were staying in the same four-star hotel.

They went out that night, dancing and chatting into the early hours. Six months later, she moved from Birmingham to Manchester to be with him.

In January 2019, David, 60, proposed during a cruise. And in 2024 they married in Jamaica.

David says of Lorraine: "Within a couple of days I realised I could spend the rest of my life with her."

New experiences in Majorca in the 1970s



1841

Thomas Cook organises first package tour: a chartered train for temperance supporters from Leicester to Loughborough

1930s

First modern packages emerge with flights from London to South of France

Benidorm tourists, 1964



1938

The UK's Holidays With Pay Act guarantees workers paid time off, creating a wider holiday market

1949

Horizon Holidays launches and pioneers affordable sun-and-sea packages

1950s

1.5 million Britons travel abroad thanks to rise of affordable air travel and package deals

Lillian Bevington, 63, from Thames Ditton, Surrey, takes a dip in the Med at Lloret de Mar on the Costa Brava in 1971



Londoner Mary Jamieson learning how to drink wine the "traditional Spanish way" while holidaying in Majorca in July 1967



Sunbathers in 1979 in Torremolinos, Spain

WITH their offer of sun, sea and sand, not to mention exotic new discoveries such as bidets, olive oil and garlic, package deals were beloved by British holidaymakers in the 1970s and 80s.

While many remained faithful, when the internet brought the ability to book separate flights and hotels lots of travellers were tempted to cheat.

But the extra hassle of DIY trips, plus problems with bookings and lack of financial protection - especially during covid - means sunseekers are returning in droves to package breaks.

Travel agent Richard Slater, of Macclesfield-based Henbury Travel,

By Sue Lee and Hannah Britt

says business has risen fivefold since the pandemic, with 95% being packages.

He says: "The internet came along and all the holidaymakers had a dabble with that, booking their own flights and accommodation, and they got their fingers burnt or found it too complicated and returned to booking package holidays. I think we've come full circle."

Nostalgia also plays a part, with Brightsun Travel, founded in the 1980s, saying more travellers are

We're all going on a package holiday

Forget independent travel where you book hotels and flights separately, many of us are now going back to simpler all-in deals

1970s

New jumbo jets increase capacity, opening up destinations like the US and Kenya

Spanish airline Iberia

1980s

High Street travel agencies flourish as package holiday sales soar

yearning for the postcards-and-phrase-books holidays of a simpler, analogue era.

The firm's Mala Schneider says: "There was a lot of fun to be had, living adventures and experiences in the moment."

Martin Oliver, 75, a retired marine engineer and author from Coventry, recalls his 1970 package trip to Palma, Majorca, with pals.

He says: "Flying was more comfortable back then – no security checks, more legroom, and fewer delays."

"But there was also a lingering smell of cigarettes, as smoking was allowed for passengers seated towards the rear of the plane. It is

hard to believe now." And they landed in a different world.

Martin, whose book *Happy Jack* is about growing up in the 1960s, says: "It was the first time in our lives we'd ordered a bottle of wine



Martin Oliver on holiday in Palma, 1970

with a meal in a restaurant." They also tried garlic and siestas – but were stumped by the olive oil on the table, having only ever used it "warm, for earache".

He adds: "One of the lads mentioned an item next to his toilet with a sprinkler in it for washing his feet and swimming trunks. Of course, it was a bidet!"

Package deals as we think of them began in 1949, with Majorca a focus in the 1950s. Most folk then holidayed in the UK, with just 4.5 million trips taken abroad in 1963. That had virtually doubled by 1970 – although only one in three people had been overseas. Mediterranean hotspots Greece

and Spain were the most popular for one or two-week deals, with the more adventurous travellers venturing to the then undeveloped Algarve.

THESE days, Spain is still the top-selling package destination, although Morocco and Egypt offer good value.

And there are all kinds of packages available. Sean Tipton, of the Association of British Travel Agents (Abta), says: "There's a lot more flexibility in terms of length of stay

and destination. You can get a package to trek through the Andes now, if you want."

Abta figures for late 2024 to early 2025 found 62% of those going abroad chose a package deal, with 18 to 24-year-olds being key bookers.

Jo Rhodes, of Which? Travel, says: "Booking a package is still the best way to protect your next holiday abroad. The ATOL scheme ensures you won't be left out of pocket or, worse, stranded if your holiday company goes bust."

And Sean adds: "The 'cheap and cheerful' reputation is just a snobby attitude. If you adopt it then you're missing out."



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What's your tippie?

by **Matt Nixon**

Fining wine without use of animals

WINE by its very nature is not reliant on animal-products. But for centuries, a process called fining has been used to clear the product. It involves a clarifying agent being added to bind to impurities, helping to remove them via filtration. Various additives can be used, including gelatin (made from animal skins, bone and cartilage), isinglass (made from the swim bladders of fish) and egg whites. The amounts involved in wine-making per bottle are infinitesimal but that's no excuse if you're proudly vegan. And with some half a million Britons and rising taking part in Veganuary, and three million adults who say they are vegetarian or vegan, it's worth taking note.

The good news for drinkers is that there are plenty of vegan options where non-animal or fish-based agents such as charcoal, silica or clay help refine the wine. And it's a preference producers are increasingly aware of. And I'd guess it's pretty much impossible to tell the difference. Look out for the vegan label when shopping. There's very little chance of tasting anything different in your wine.

Here are six selections to get you started...

CLEAR WINNERS FOR VEGANS

1 Errazuriz Estate Reserva Sauvignon Blanc 2024 (from £9, 12.5%)
This lovely, quaffable Chilean sauvignon blanc is like all your summer picnics come at once. Plenty of citrus and bright fresh apples and pears with herby notes and a smidgeon of tropical fruit. Bone dry with a zingy acidity. Available from Tesco, Morrisons, Spar and Ocado.

2 Zuccardi Q Chardonnay 2023 (£16.50, 10%)
A refreshing chardonnay with oak notes but without the butteriness that typifies the grape. Plenty of vanilla and lime with a refreshing, medium-bodied finish. Dryish with a nice acidity and mineral notes on the palate. Available from Tesco.

3 Louis Jadot Beaujolais-Villages 'Combe aux Jacques' 2024 (from £11, 12.5%)
This easy-drinking Beaujolais needs no introduction. Soft fruity tannins and a warm, medium-bodied finish make it a perennial favourite. Light with plenty of acidity and a smooth, dryish finish. A very nice red and widely available so shop around for the best price. Available from Tesco, the Co-op, Ocado, Asda, EH Booths and Wholefoods.

4 Zalze Fairtrade Shiraz Grenache Cabernet Franc 2022 (£9.25, 14.5%)
This deep, dark and intense South African blend is another stonker of a wine. Big flavours and aromas of plum and cherry with notes of spice and a full-bodied finish will knock your socks off. Medium acidity and a dry, moreish texture on the palate will send your taste-buds into overtime. Available from The Co-op.

5 Caves des Roches - Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence (£9.25, 12%)
I have a soft spot for curvy bottles and this is a corker. The Provencal rosé inside is just as attractive; dry on the palate with plenty of red fruit flavours and a lovely, tingly mineral finish. A light, bright wine perfect for quaffing. Available from Tesco.

6 Hola Barcelona Rosé (£10, 11%)
Another super easy-drinking wine for any occasion, this Spanish rosé is decent value with really fruity flavours and a bright, refreshing finish. Medium-bodied and medium-dry but certainly not mediocre. Strawberries and watermelon on the palate with notes of cherry. Delicious. Available from Tesco.



Share your own drink-related tips with matt.nixon@reachplc.com

Sofa so good...photo of dumped couch wins award

BY LAUREN BEAVIS

A PHOTO of a dumped sofa that became a tourist attraction has won a Portrait of Britain award.

The image shows a young girl, Amaya, sitting on a fly-tipped couch spotted by Alex Elton-Wall in the Forest of Dean last April.

His photo captured people's imagination and Alex has since taken the portraits of over 150 locals who started adding living room items around the sofa - now known as The Lydbrook Lounge.

The Gloucestershire attraction even has its own listing on TripAdvisor and a Facebook page where visitors post photos of themselves sitting on it.

Alex's snap is among the winners of the British Journal of Photography Portrait of Britain Volume 8. He said: "That sofa is the gift that keeps on giving."

Winning photo of Amaya



Locals added extra items around the fly-tipped sofa



Heathrow drops 100ml liquids rule

BY KRIS BORATYN

PASSENGERS at Heathrow can now leave liquids in containers in their bags while going through security after a £1billion scanner upgrade.

Travellers can keep liquids of up to two litres in carry-on bags and no longer need to remove laptops or place toiletries in clear plastic bags.

It follows the full rollout of high-tech CT scanners across all Heathrow terminals and makes it the biggest airport in the world to introduce the equipment everywhere.

Gatwick, Edinburgh and Birmingham installed the scanners earlier.

They also increased the liquid limit to two litres but Heathrow, the UK's largest, is the first major airport to complete the transition.

Scanners produce detailed 3D images of cabin bags. Heathrow says this will help move people through security faster while still meeting all safety requirements.

The airport said the new system can process "thousands of passengers an hour" and improve overall flow through terminals.

But the rule change only applies to flights leaving Heathrow. Anyone returning to the UK must still follow the rules at the airport they are flying

from, as many countries continue to enforce the 100ml rule. The nationwide introduction of scanners has been delayed several times.

In 2019, Boris Johnson promised the 100ml liquid rule would be removed by the end of 2022.

Covid delayed that plan. The government later announced a new deadline of June 2024, calling it the biggest shake-up of airport security in decades.

But that deadline was missed. Larger airports were unable to complete the work on time.

Then, in June 2024, the government told those smaller airports that had already scrapped the 100ml rule to bring it back, causing frustration.

The EU also reinstated the rule weeks later, adding to the confusion for passengers.

For most of last summer, the advice was to assume the old 100ml limit still applied, unless stated otherwise.

Heathrow chief executive Thomas Woldbye said the £1billion upgrade programme will make a huge difference. He said people will spend "less time preparing for security and more time enjoying their journey".



Clear plastic bags are not needed

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National Hunt racing: ITV is at Cheltenham for Festival Trials Day and Doncaster for Great Yorkshire Chase Day, with seven Grade 2 races across the two cards.

Australian Open: The third round of the season's first tennis major is under way.

NFL: It's time to crown the Conference champions and discover who will contest Super Bowl LX. The action begins tomorrow night as the New England Patriots visit AFC rivals the Denver Broncos.

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seconds for the BEGINNER task. For a greater challenge, try BEGINNER and INTERMEDIATE in 30 seconds. True mental gymnasts should try INTERMEDIATE and ADVANCED in 30 seconds together.

Today's answers can be found on page 43

YOUR ANSWERS

Beginner	13	x3	+3	÷7	x12	-20	÷4	+38	÷3	
Intermediate	11	SQUARE IT	-37	5/12 OF THIS	+36	x3	-85	75% OF THIS	÷12	
Advanced	349	-185	INCREASE BY 75%	+186	6/11 OF THIS	-76	÷13	+463	÷9	

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EUROMILLIONS
4 5 13 21 42 3 10
THUNDERBALL
7 15 18 26 32 3

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22
SET FOR LIFE 1 5 13 17 21 2

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21
LOTTERY 5 24 28 46 49 56 19
THUNDERBALL 6 7 13 20 21 4

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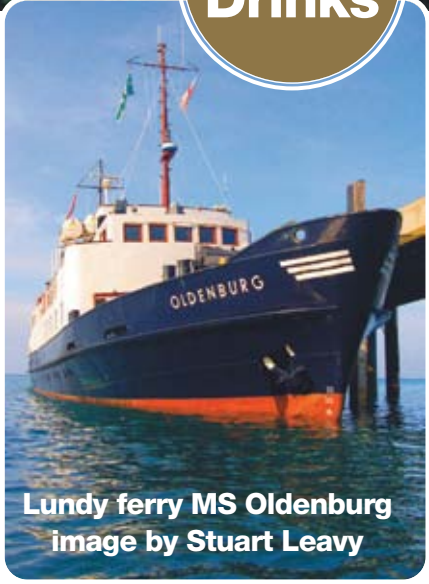


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Lundy ferry MS Oldenburg
image by Stuart Leavy

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PHONE POLL RESULTS

We asked in our poll on Thursday:
Is Rachel Reeves' tax regime putting our high streets in peril?

YES: 98%
NO: 2%

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Fill in all the squares so that each row, each column, and each 3x3 square contain all the digits from 1 to 9

	1			4			5	
		8	2		1	7		4
7					3			6
	6	3		7			4	2
5			3	2	6			
	9			5			3	
1					2			5
	2	5	6		4	3	7	
	8			3			1	9

This is the Quick Sudoku for the solver in a hurry. For today's solution call: **09071 812 571** (Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge)

For extra clues call: **09013 225 602** (Calls cost 75p plus your telephone company's network access charge)

MORE PUZZLES - PULLOUT YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

6	3	2	5	4	9	7	8	1
4	8	9	2	1	7	5	3	6
1	5	7	6	3	8	2	4	9
9	7	4	3	2	6	1	5	8
2	6	5	7	8	1	4	9	3
3	1	8	4	9	5	6	2	7
5	9	3	1	6	2	8	7	4
7	4	6	8	5	3	9	1	2
8	2	1	9	7	4	3	6	5



The museum and a volunteer showing how carpets used to be made

Roll up, roll up... museum reopens for carpet lovers



BRITAIN'S only carpet museum will be open for Valentine's Day after its recent closure floored fans.

The attraction shut for good on December 20 due to visitor numbers dwindling to just six a day.

But publicity surrounding the closure has seen interest shoot up, so it is being reopened over half-term from February 14 for four days.

Entry, which used to be £6 for adults and £17 for families, will be free.

Geoffrey Gilbert, chair of the Carpet Museum Trust in Kidderminster, Worcs, said: "Volunteers have expressed great enthusiasm and commitment to open the museum as much as possible in the coming months."

"Meanwhile, discussions continue on support and funding for a new museum for Kidderminster."

"It is hoped that a statement of how

BY ADAM DUTTON

this will progress will be made in the next few weeks."

Local resident Graham Connell, 70, said: "It's marvellous news to see such an important slice of the town's history opening once more."

"Almost everyone living in this country has carpets in their homes and that is down mainly to this town and the people who worked here."

"When the museum opens again, I'll be first in line."

The Museum of Carpet was set up in a mill in 2012 and even got a four-star rating on TripAdvisor. It features hundreds of rug and underlay samples from the last 300 years.

But in recent years it struggled to cover the £100,000 annual running costs.



Fans have been lavishing it with love

The Saturday briefing

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER by CAROLINE FORD

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Is there anything you're yearning to know? Send your questions, on any subject, to the contacts given below, and we will do our best to answer them...

Q If the dinosaurs had not died out, what possible effect would that have had on the development of Homo sapiens?

Chris Evans, Maidstone, Kent

A When an asteroid struck the earth 66 million years ago, only the small, feathered flying dinosaurs we know today as birds made it through. The extinction cleared the evolutionary stage for mammals – creating the lineage that would lead to humans.

The mammals that survived – mostly small, nocturnal, burrowing creatures – were able to rapidly diversify in size and form.

Had the dinosaurs not been wiped out, palaeontologists have proposed they would have continued to evolve and rule the planet, as they'd already survived rising and falling seas, temperature fluctuations and volcanic eruptions for more than 160 million years.

Dinosaurs occupied most of the ecological niches when the asteroid hit and large mammals – such as mammoths and rhino – would probably never have had the chance to become the dominant land animals.

Scientists speculate that the evolution of primates and ancestors of Homo sapiens – from small, tree-dwelling mammals in the late Cretaceous period – would likely also not have occurred.

However some scientists argue that the reign of the dinosaurs may already have been coming to an end. A UK fossil study in 2016 showed support for the view that dinosaur species had been in long-term decline for 50 million years due to extinctions outpacing the emergence of new dinosaur species. In 1982, palaeontologist

Pictures: GETTY



GREAT BALLS OF FIRE: The dinosaurs on the brink of extinction and, below, the National Windrush Memorial

Dale Russell speculated that a raptor called Troodon – which had a relatively large brain-to-body ratio – could eventually have evolved into a sentient being, which he called the “dinosauroid”.

Q I have a relative who travelled on the Empire Windrush and I wondered what the ship was used for before it became a troopship in the Second World War?

Kenny Edwards, Cardiff

A The Empire Windrush is best remembered for bringing more than a thousand passengers – and two stowaways – from Jamaica to Tilbury, Essex, in 1948.

The majority were from the Caribbean and many were war veterans, responding to a call for labour to help Britain rebuild after the Second World War.

The ship was built in Germany in 1930 by Blohm & Voss, who also built the battleship Bismarck, and was called the MV Monte Rosa. Originally a cruise

liner, the ship took German travellers to Europe and South America on Nazi-approved holidays. As late as 1936, the ship was carrying passengers between Hamburg and London.

Historian and author Paul Arnott, in his book Windrush: A Ship Through Time, reveals that the ship made more than 20 package-holiday journeys to London, disembarking at Greenwich.

During the Second World War, the ship was requisitioned by the Nazis and used to transport troops for the German invasion of Norway. Later, it became a prison ship used to deport Jewish people.

Captured by the British toward the end of the war and renamed Empire Windrush, after the River Windrush in the Cotswolds, the ship continued as a troopship until 1954, when she caught fire and sank in the Mediterranean, with the loss of four crew.

Q Why do we say “many happy returns” on someone’s birthday. What are happy returns?

Anne Jones, Stalybridge, Cheshire

A We say “many happy returns” as a shortened wish for the phrase “many happy returns of the day”. It’s a traditional greeting that

has been in use since the 1700s in the UK. Once used as a reply to greetings such as Merry Christmas or Happy New Year, many happy returns is now primarily used to wish someone a Happy Birthday.

The returns refer to the annual recurrence of the special day, meaning we hope the occasion happens many more times, with a long and joyful life for the person.

A similar greeting, multos et foelices, was reportedly used by the ancient Romans, especially for higher-ranking people or on significant occasions like birthdays.

An early printed reference is found in Joseph Addison’s newspaper The Freeholder in 1716: “The usual salutation to a man upon his birth day among the ancient Romans was Multos et Foelices; in which they wished him many happy returns of it.”

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Geoff Owen, from Wrexham, remembers singing the first verse of this poem – which was set to music – in the pub with his mates and would like to read the rest of the lyrics. The song became popular in the American Civil War.

MOTHER, IS THE BATTLE OVER?

Benedict Roefs (1864)

“Mother, is the battle over?
Thousands have been slain, they say.
Is my father come?
and tell me
Has the army gained the day?
“Is he well or is he wounded?
Mother, do you think he’s slain?
If he is, pray will you tell me
Will my father come again?
“Mother, I see you always sighing
Since that paper last you read;
Tell me why you now are crying:
Why that cap is on your head?”
“Yes, my boy, your noble father
Is one numbered with the slain;
Though he loves me very dearly
Ne’er on earth we’ll meet again.
“Fighting for the glorious Union
Like a hero he is slain;
Still the day may not be distant
When in heaven we’ll meet again.”

If you can’t remember the words to a favourite verse or song from yesteryear, send us a snippet and we’ll do our best to find all the wonderful words.

BEACHCOMBER 109 YEARS OLD AND STILL AS FOXY AS EVER...

AS LOYAL readers will be aware, I have not mentioned fox-hunting in this column for almost 20 years. Recent events, however, have brought this vital matter back to my attention. As you will recall, the traditional sport of fox-hunting was made illegal under The Hunting Act (2004). This caused widespread concern, not least to Britain’s only urban fox hunt, and its Master, Sir Finsbury Parkes.

As I reported at the time, Sir Finsbury launched a spirited campaign to ensure the survival of The Highbury Hunt, continuing the tradition of gentlemen in pinstripe suits chasing urban foxes through the back gardens of Islington houses, while wearing

in-line skates and playing kazoos, aided by a pack of yapping Yorkshire terriers.

Their argument was based on the dictionary definition of the word “hunting”, which meant “pursuing with intent to capture”. They pointed out that The Highbury Hunt, in its 300-year history, had never actually captured a fox, so no such intent could be inferred. Now, however, there is a proposal to extend the ban to trail-hunting, in which the dogs and huntsmen follow an animal-based scent train instead of a real

fox, and this poses a further threat to The Highbury Hunt, as Sir Finsbury explains.

“To ensure our survival 20 years ago, we agreed to retrain our Yorkshire terriers to attack ungrammatical estate agents. We were incensed to notice a dramatic increase in the number of properties they described as ‘comprised of three bedrooms’ when they should have said ‘comprising three bedrooms’. Our terriers were trained to break into estate agents’ properties and rip the letters ‘o’ and ‘f’ from their keyboards. This

was seen as a valuable service, overruling the objections of a few MPs who called it ‘the illiberal in pursuit of the illiterate’.”

Now evidence has been produced showing many of the dogs have also been ripping out ‘x’, which not only reduces four and five bedrooms to ‘ur’ and ‘ive’ but leads to ‘si bedrms’ as well. The addition of ‘x’ to ‘f’ and ‘o’ is seen as a clear sign of the dogs’ lingering hostility towards foxes. Sir Finsbury points out his dogs remove ‘o’ and ‘f’ in that order, and ‘ofx’ has no relevance to foxes. He insists the o, f, x order is the dogs’ way of producing equity by removing one key from each row but faces an uphill struggle to convince legislators.



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Elaine

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Lives remembered

Daily Express obituaries, every Saturday

Glamorous stars' go-to style guru

HE DRESSED the world's most glamorous and photographed women, from first lady Jackie Kennedy and Princess Diana, to Elizabeth Taylor, Audrey Hepburn and Sophia Loren. More recently J-Lo wore a Valentino dress for her wedding, as did, rather controversially, Nicola Peltz at her nuptials to Brooklyn Beckham.

The fashion guru's show-stopping gowns were always a big hit on the red carpet. At the Oscars in 2001, Julia Roberts scooped up her Academy Award in a vintage black-and-white Valentino design.

Valentino was always a byword for luxury, wealth and glamour. On dressing the world's most beautiful women he once said: "You need to know the body, you need to know the mood of the lady, and you need a very good seamstress".

Born in Voghera in the Lombardy region of northern Italy to parents Mauro and Teresa, he was named after the silent movie star Rudolph Valentino.

His parents were very supportive of their son's artistic ambitions and his aunt Rosa, a dressmaker, allowed him to watch her in her workroom. From 1949, his parents

Valentino Garavani

Fashion designer

BORN MAY 11, 1932 – DIED JANUARY 19, 2026, AGED 93

funded his education at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and he was proud to become the first Italian couturier accepted by Paris as one of their own.

He co-founded the Valentino fashion house in 1960 with Giancarlo Giammetti, celebrated for its flamboyant retro pieces and ranked alongside Giorgio Armani and Karl Lagerfeld.

The Valentino brand continued to grow throughout the Seventies and Eighties becoming the bestselling Italian fashion export.

He was appointed a Grand Officer of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic in 1985, upgraded to Knight Grand Cross in 1986 – the highest-ranking Italian honour.

Meanwhile his many celebrity collaborations during the 1990s kept him relevant.

In 2006, he appeared in a cameo role in the hit film "The Devil Wears



Valentino Garavani dressed the most famous women in the world for decades

Prada". "Valentino: The Last Emperor", a documentary film on the designer, premiered at the 2008 Venice International Film Festival, celebrating his 45-year career.

It recounted his chance meeting with Giammetti in 1960. The pair remained life partners for over 65 years, although their romantic relationship fizzled out in 1972.

Valentino met his latest partner Bruce Hoeksema in the early 1980s who began as a model for the house and ended up its vice-president.

"Valentino passed away peacefully in his Roman home, surrounded by the love of his family" a statement said.

He lay in state at Rome's Piazza Mignanelli ahead of his funeral.

Claudette Colvin

Civil rights activist

BORN SEPTEMBER 5, 1939 – DIED JANUARY 13, 2026, AGED 86

ON MARCH 2, 1955, Claudette Colvin, aged 15, was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to give up her seat to a white woman on a segregated bus. It occurred nine months before the incident in which Rosa Parks helped spark the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott.

Colvin testified before a three-judge panel who found the law was unconstitutional leading to the Supreme Court ordering the state of Alabama end bus segregation. But her pregnancy by a married man made civil rights leaders hesitant to champion her.

She moved to New York where she worked as a nurse and brought up two sons - Ray died of a heart attack aged 37 - and Randy is an accountant in Atlanta and father of Colvin's four grandchildren.

A lifetime of jokes and laughter

AT JUST 5ft, she was the perfect comic foil to a host of comedy stars such as Leslie Crowther, Tommy Cooper, Dick Emery and Morecambe and Wise.

Sheila Bernette enjoyed a stellar career in film, television, radio and theatre spanning over 50 years.

Born Sheila Poncini in Marylebone, London, her parents were of Italian descent and her father Charles was a waiter.

She trained in ballet at the Italia Conti Stage Academy from aged two, leaving after five years to concentrate on acting, and attended the Aida Foster theatre school.

By the age of 12 she was performing in a London Palladium pantomime and three years later began treading the boards with rep companies. Her West End debut came in the revue-style musical Over The Moon at the Piccadilly Theatre, 1953 and two years later she broke into television.

She enjoyed guest roles in Hancock, alongside Tony Hancock, Hugh and I, with Hugh Lloyd and Terry Scott, and Beggar My

Sheila Bernette

Actress and singer

BORN MARCH 30, 1931 – DIED JANUARY 12, 2026, AGED 94



Sheila worked with Tommy Cooper

Neighbour with Reg Varney. She was also in Ooh La La! with Patrick Cargill, The Fall And Rise Of Reginald Perrin with Leonard Rossiter, Butterflies with Wendy

Craig and Agony Again with Maureen Lipman.

In fact she appeared with all the biggest stars of the day including Jimmy Tarbuck, Larry Grayson, Little and Large and Rod Hull. She was also one of the regular practical jokers in the UK version of Candid Camera, played Sister Delaney in Coronation Street in the 1970s and appeared on BBC variety show The Good Old Days from 1968 to 1983.

Younger generations may remember her in the CBBC show Hotel Trubble as Mrs Poshington – a hotel guest who never leaves.

But with her love of variety, she also kept returning to the Players' Theatre Club, in Covent Garden, to perform Victorian music-hall entertainment over five decades.

Bernette appeared in 10 films from Sons And Lovers (1960) to Driving Aphrodite (2009).

The unmarried star passed away at Brinsworth House, Twickenham, a care home jokingly called "Old Pro's Paradise", for retired entertainers, supported by the Royal Variety Charity.

Kenny Morris

Musician

BORN FEBRUARY 1, 1957 – DIED JANUARY 15, 2026, AGED 68

KENNY Morris was the first studio drummer of the band Siouxsie and the Banshees and part of the post-punk avant-garde.

Drummers Stephen Morris of Joy Division and Kevin Haskins of Bauhaus cited him as a huge influence and his drumming on Metal Postcard (1978) was extensively sampled by Massive Attack almost two decades later.

The self-taught musician joined the band in February 1977. He played on their debut album, The Scream (1978), and Join Hands (1979) before leaving abruptly.

He was born of Irish parents and grew up in Waltham Abbey, Essex, believing his biological mother was actually his aunt.

Morris went to St Ignatius' College in Enfield, where he became a friend of future collaborator and film director John Maybury. He later



Post-punk icon Kenny Morris

attended Barnet College and studied fine art and film-making at North East London Polytechnic.

He was at the first live appearance of Siouxsie and the Banshees at the 100 Club in 1976 and was impressed.

He briefly joined the band the Flowers of Romance with Sid Vicious, but after a few rehearsals, they split up and he joined the Banshees.

In later life he worked on film soundtracks and directed five films before establishing himself as an artist in Ireland.

With a BA Honours in Fine Art, he held several teaching posts and ran an art gallery in Kildare Town in the 1990s.

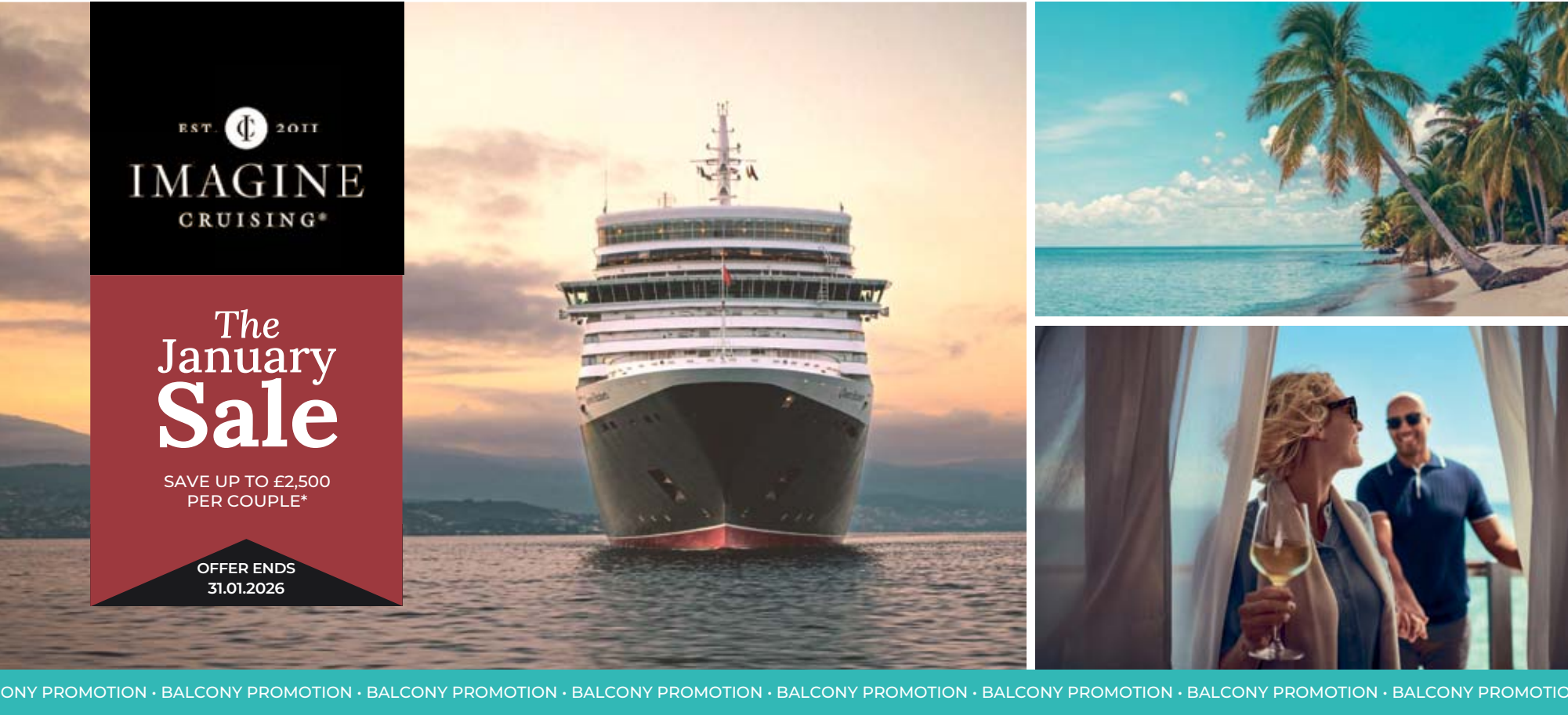
The musician later resided in Cork where he taught art and sold his paintings online.

A 2024 exhibition of his artworks in Dublin was titled A Banshee Left Wailing.

He had begun drumming again with Shrine of the Vampyre, an Irish punk goth band.

Morris died in Cork following a short illness.

Written by
KAREN ROCKETT



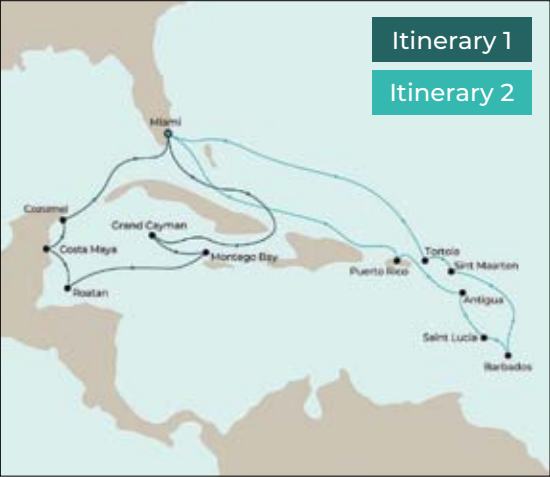
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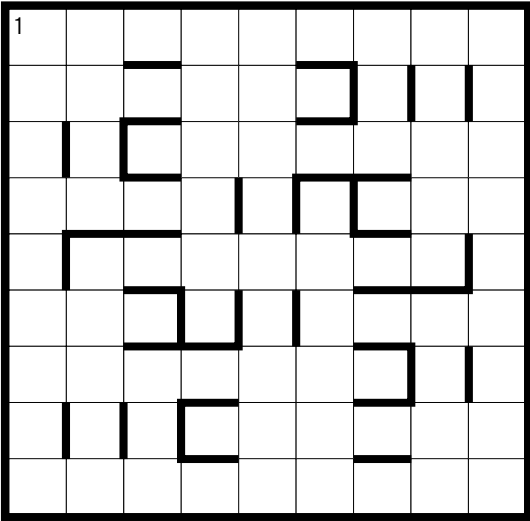
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- ACROSS
- 1 Inexact (9)
Partners (7)
For each (3)
Synthetic material (7)
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Not sure (9)
Sales agents (4)
Instant (6)
Perceive sounds (4)
Month (3)
Scold harshly (6)

- DOWN
- 1 Unrehearsed (9)
Hairdresser's shop (5)
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The _ de Triomphe,
Parisian landmark (3)
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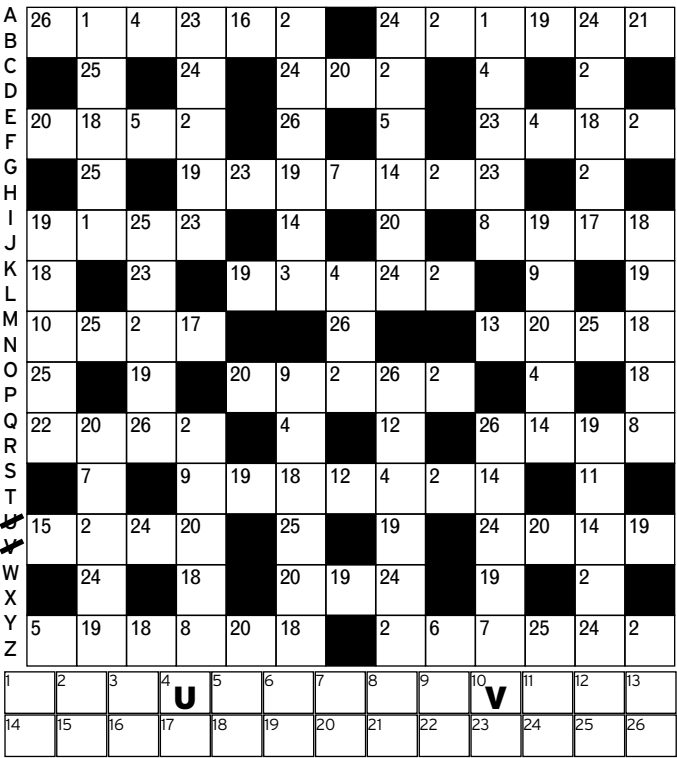
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LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION
ACROSS Sycophant, Couple, Spanner, Oslo, Ace, Gesture, Nun, Ruth, Earlier, Enamel, Safeguard.
DOWN Schooners, Yobs, Oppose, Plaything, Ann, Niece, Threshold, Bureau, Guava, Tier, Ref.

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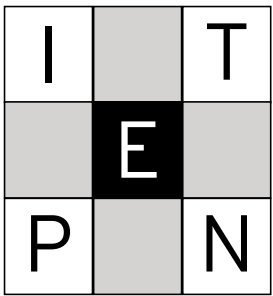
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LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION
ACROSS Qualm, Hover, Alabaster, Busy, West, Agent (clue), Air, Urn, Owls, Foil, Ill, Asp, Yeast, Legs, Clan, Yesterday, Jiffy, Duets.
DOWN Zebra, Igloo, Astrology, Ally, Self, Alley, Mob, Toy, Apex, Lace, Has, Red, Trout, View, Cake, Regularly, Futon, Pinch.

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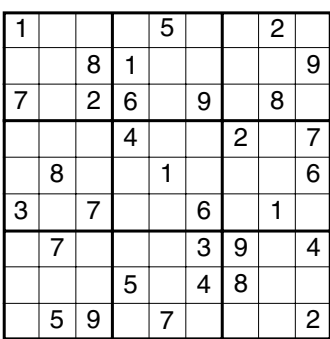


Can you find 18 or more words containing only the five letters shown on the left? Each word must include the letter in the centre, in this case E, and must contain at least four letters, but there is no limit on the number of times you can use a letter in any word. Your list should include an eight-letter word that's remorseful.

Average mark: 18 words • Good: 23 words
Excellent: 27 words • Incredible: 30 words

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION: afar, alfalfa, faff, falafel, fall, faller, fare, fear, feel, feeler, felafel, fell, fella, feller, feral, flare, flea, flee, fleer, free, freer, leaf, raffle, reef, reefer, refer, referee, referrer.
The clued word was: REFERRAL

SUDOKU



Fill the grid so that every column, row, and 3x3 square includes all the digits from 1 to 9.
Level: Moderate
Target: 24 mins

LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

9	2	4	1	7	3	5	8	6
8	3	1	6	9	5	2	4	7
5	7	6	2	4	8	3	1	9
7	9	3	4	8	1	6	5	2
2	1	5	7	6	9	8	3	4
6	4	8	3	5	2	9	7	1
3	8	2	9	1	4	7	6	5
1	5	7	8	2	6	4	9	3
4	6	9	5	3	7	1	2	8

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FAITH, HOPE AND SUE Lisa Wild



RUPERT AND THE PENGUINS No 21



Carrying the honey, Rupert leads Podgy and Rosalie across the meadow. At last he hears a humming noise and traces it to where a cloud of bees is hovering over flowers. "Now, don't come too near," he warns the cousins as he begins to smear honey on the leaves of a nearby bush. The chums lie well back while the bees buzz towards the honeyed leaves. Now Rupert begins to crawl forward. Podgy calls, "Don't be silly!" And Rosalie chimes in, "Be careful, Rupert!"



Upon some leaves the honey's smeared.
"And now it's time we disappeared!"

"Stay back!" Then on hands and knees,
Rupert creeps near the cloud of bees.

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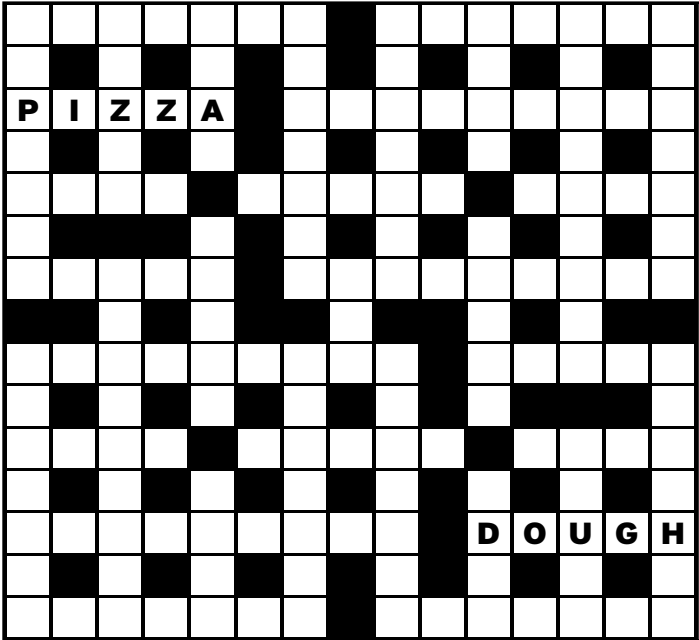
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THE SUNSHINE PUZZLE

The Sunshine Puzzle has been a firm favourite with readers of the Express for many years. All you need to do is find the correct home for the listed words. We have helped you by placing two. Here are the words that go into the grid:

- ONE
- AJAR
- BOAR
- BONE
- EDIT
- RARE
- RUST
- SAGE
- STAR
- BATCH
- DOUGH
- ENSUE
- JADED
- PIZZA
- RAZES
- SHIRE
- SMASH
- TRUSS
- VIDEO
- BESMEAR
- BURGESS
- EARTHLY
- EXTREME
- PAPYRUS
- PERHAPS
- SARCASM
- SATISFY
- SEASIDE
- SUBSIDE
- SUCCESS
- SURGEON
- AERIALIST
- ECONOMICS
- IMITATIVE
- MORTICIAN
- RESERVOIR
- SURPRISES



For today's solution call: 0907 181 2584

**Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.*

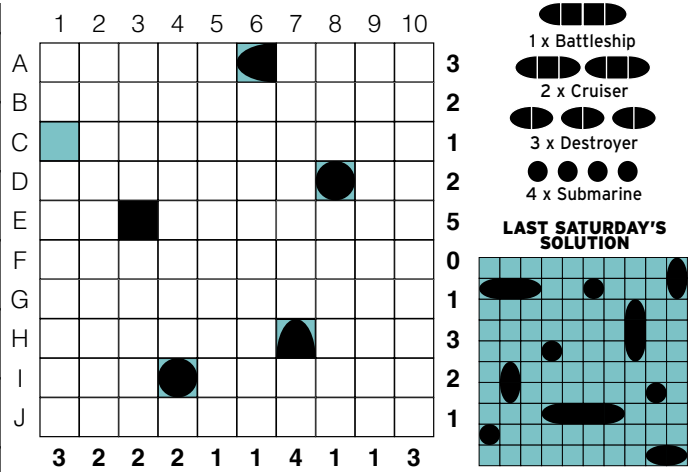
LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

ACROSS Nuclear reactors, Volunteer, Case, Toga, Moonlit, Peat bog, Era, Oil well, Reprint, Lei, Magenta, Nirvana, Nuts, Work, Exonerate, Self-centredness. **DOWN** Non compos mentis, Love, Auld, Rank, Aver, Tort, Straightjackets, Spotlight, Obbligato, Clueing, Stellar, Sparing, Rapport, Serf, Hose, Cert, Gape, Wean.

THE DAILY EXPRESS 30-SECOND CHALLENGE

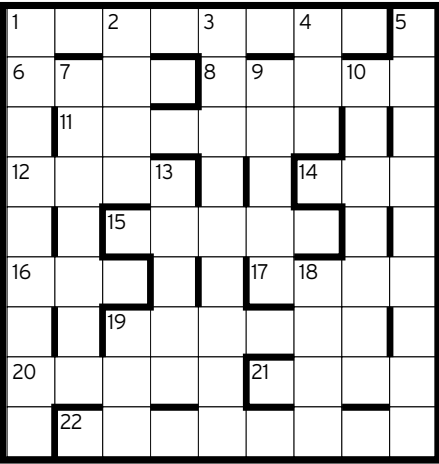
TODAY'S ANSWERS: BEGINNER = 17; INTERMEDIATE = 8; ADVANCED = 53.

BATTLESHIPS



FIND where the fleet of ships shown is hidden in the grid. The numbers to the right of and below the grid indicate how many of the squares in that row are filled in with ships or parts of ships. The ships do not touch each other, even diagonally. Some squares have been filled in to start you off.

SMALL CROSSWORD



For today's solution call: 0907 181 2583

**Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.*

LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

ACROSS 1 Friendly, 6 Rods, 8 Union, 11 Peered, 12 Gear, 14 Bee, 15 Poets, 16 Eat, 17 Ship, 19 Origin, 20 Tease, 21 Urge, 22 Prospect. **DOWN** 1 Fragments, 2 Idea, 3 Nurseries, 4 Lid, 5 Interpret, 7 Operate, 9 Nests, 10 Opening, 13 Roars, 18 Hire, 19 Oar.

TARGET



HOW many words of four letters or more can you make from the letters shown here? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each must contain the centre letter and there must be at least one nine-letter word. No plurals. Verb forms ending in "s" permitted.

TODAY'S TARGET Good 18; very good 24; excellent 35 (or more). Solution next Saturday.

LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

agin, align, awing, awning, fang, fawning, **FAWNINGLY**, flag, flaying, fling, flying, gaily, gain, gila, glia, gnaw, gnawn, lang, laying, ling, linga, lying, waling, waning, wing, yang, yawing, yawning

Call 0907 181 2586 for today's Target solution
**Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. All puzzles use The Chambers Dictionary*

CRUSADER CROSSWORD

WIN £100

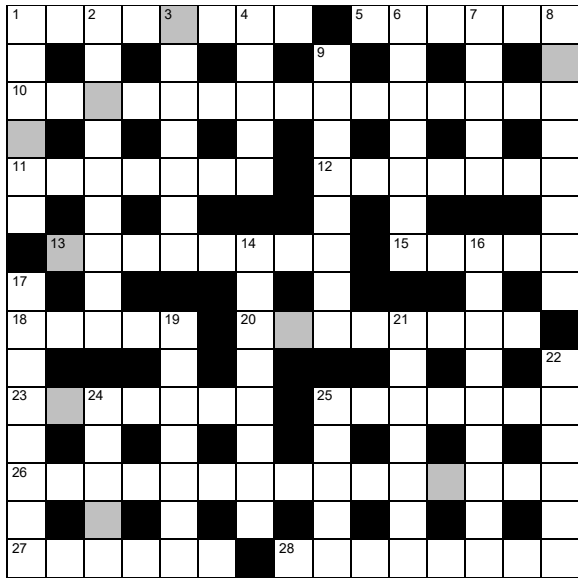
FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN £100 CASH read down the letters in the highlighted squares to reveal the mystery word

ACROSS

- 1 South American rave-up in broadcast (8)
- 5 Engineers with set of two to fix (6)
- 10 Listener with article about southern milliner, very important (5-10)
- 11 Penny seen inside, cut, getting married (7)
- 12 Go back with man about ship (7)
- 13 Happy-go-lucky European boarding vehicle without cost (8)
- 15 Avoid eccentric, e.g., odd (5)
- 18 Some academic, learned and intelligible (5)
- 20 Language expert lugs it in awkwardly (8)
- 23 On returning, slim head of geography gets nowt (7)
- 25 Son originally left it with her slide (7)
- 26 Typical father with royal in favour of the starter? (3,3,3,6)
- 27 Wife makes us pose unexpectedly (6)
- 28 Prime minister - last to arrive for first performance (8)

DOWN

- 1 See pal excited, showing delight (6)
- 2 It's about free film brought out again (9)
- 3 Clive - he damaged conveyance (7)
- 4 Insect concealed under a page (5)
- 6 Entrants initially joined together and came into view (7)
- 7 US soldier in a French article is nimble (5)
- 8 German turning up first seen with former queen's list (8)
- 9 Medical specialist consuming tea, say and fish (8)
- 14 Lower price to collect English member (8)
- 16 Set off woman's fee (9)
- 17 Sleep quietly in school with small drink (8)
- 19 For union leader in Rhode Island with common sense, it's disastrous (7)
- 21 One in a French class with distinctive clothing (7)
- 22 Thing easily done in gentle wind (6)
- 24 Trunk held by director sometimes (5)
- 25 Guide sister carrying golf peg (5)



TO ENTER: Call 0904 161 3700 (calls cost £1.50 plus your telephone company's network access charge) and leave your answer and details, or text **DXCRUS** followed by a space, your answer, name and address details to **88833** (texts cost £1.50 plus your standard network rate). Lines close at midnight tonight. Or send your grid containing the answer in the shaded squares by posting it to: Crusader Crossword, January 24, PO Box 8694, Derby DE1 9TW. Entries must be postmarked by January 26 at the latest. For any postal enquiries, call helpline number. An extra day is given for postal entries during bank holidays. SP: Spoke - 0333 202 3390.

● One weekly winner will be the first random correct entry drawn from all entry routes after the closing date of midnight tonight. Competition runs Sunday to Saturday. The Editor's decision is final. **NEED HELP?** Call 0904 161 1609 for 5 extra clues! Calls cost £1.50 plus your telephone company's network access charge.

NAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

Weekly Crusader Crossword Winner
4-10 January: M Higgott, Worcester;
Please allow 30 days for prizes to arrive

LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

ACROSS 1 Magician, 5 Actual, 10 Keep one's shirt on, 11 Dentist, 12 Lenient, 13 Barefoot, 15 Incur, 18 Areas, 20 Fiddling, 23 Sceptic, 25 Pensive, 26 Birthday present, 27 Easily, 28 Creditor. **DOWN** 1 Make do, 2 Greengage, 3 Choc-ice, 4 Avert, 6 Chianti, 7 Untie, 8 Long-term, 9 Isolated, 14 Official, 16 Confident, 17 Passable, 19 Satchel, 21 Linseed, 22 Letter, 24 Earls, 25 Paper. **Prizeword:** Herbicide.

GET THE BRILLIANT EXPRESS PUZZLES APP ON YOUR PHONE TODAY!

THE ALPHABEATER

CAN you crack the Alphabeater? It's a tough twist on our popular Alphapuzzle, designed to stretch your mental muscles to the limit. Each grid number below represents a letter or a black square. As in Alphapuzzle, every letter of the alphabet is used. But now you have to complete the grid too! Use the given letters and the given black squares below the main grid to start.

To add to the fiendish fun, Alphabeater is 'rotationally symmetrical'. In other words the grid is the same if you turn the page upside down. So, for example if there is a six-letter word Across which starts in the top left corner, there will be a corresponding six-letter word Across which ends in the bottom right corner square. Every black square has a symmetrical 'twin' but the 'twin' may not always share the same number. This can help identify other black squares. Of course if the centre square is black it has no corresponding 'twin'. Solution next Saturday.

A	10	36	40	27	13	33	7	32	27	37	34	30	5
B	31	30	7	10	27	32	30	21	2	40	30	39	19
C	24	40	30	13	1	21	9	7	4	23	31	17	37
D	7	9	34	23	17	28	9	2	14	14	13	2	4
E	38	30	36	18	15	16	40	23	40	5	10	14	10
F	34	33	37	1	14	28	27	24	7	20	32	34	25
G	15	14	6	26	21	31	12	16	18	30	38	30	40
H	3	18	5	14	3	28	8	12	14	1	11	29	25
I	18	4	16	32	19	11	28	31	38	7	29	30	9
J	15	8	35	17	8	1	30	2	14	3	23	15	16
K	3	15	5	34	13	16	2	37	39	27	6	14	40
L	20	15	8	13	33	10	14	21	2	34	25	30	21
M	11	26	16	10	22	18	11	2	22	30	40	22	25
N													
O													
P													
Q													
R													
S													
T													
U													
V													
W													
X													
Y													
Z													

Target Time: 38 minutes

Today's full solution

0907 181 2557

Extra letter clues

0907 181 2559

Today's full solution

0907 181 2557

Extra letter clues

0907 181 2559

Call for up to six extra letter clues. (Deduct three minutes for each extra letter heard.) Callers will also be given two black square numbers free of any target time penalty.

*Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.

Alternatively, for six Extra Letter clues direct to your mobile, text **DSXBEAT** to 64343.

Texts cost £1 plus your standard network rate.

LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION Black squares:

4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14, 17, 19, 21, 24, 37, 38, 39, 40. **Across:** Broken, Leg, Quake, Cutter, Jump, Elevator, Maximises, Endemism, Wary, Paving, Fixed, Tot, Zephyr. **Down:** Judgement, Optimum, Draft, Ace, Eked, Infer, Limbs, Bulge, Haze, Awe, Leant, Slavish, Geography.



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Day 3	Trondheim, Norway Also stopping at: Kristiansund · Rørvik	Day 9 Svolvær, Norway Also stopping at: Tromsø · Finnsnes · Harstad · Risøyhamn · Sortland · Stokmarknes · Stamsund
Day 4	Bodø, Norway ★Cross the Arctic Circle★ Also stopping at: Brønnøysund · Sandnessjøen · Nesna · Ørnes · Stamsund · Svolvær	Day 10 Brønnøysund, Norway Also stopping at: Bodø · Ørnes · Nesna · Sandnessjøen · Rørvik
Day 5	Tromsø, Norway Also stopping at: Stokmarknes · Sortland · Risøyhamn · Harstad · Finnsnes · Skjervøy	Day 11 Trondheim, Norway Also stopping at: Kristiansund · Molde
Day 6	Honningsvåg, Norway Also stopping at: Øksfjord · Hammerfest · Havøysund · Kjøllefjord · Mehamn · Berlevåg	Day 12 Bergen, Norway Also stopping at: Ålesund · Torvik · Måløy · Florø Disembark in Bergen and transfer to the airport for your flight to London
Day 7	Kirkenes, Norway	

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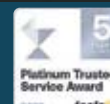
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TRAVEL

EXPAND
YOUR
HORIZONS

Edited by JULIE DELAHAYE

IMPRESSIVE
Aqueduct runs
alongside the
viaduct

Chirk, rest and play

*You don't need to travel far to see an eye-catching 175-year-old feat of engineering, says **AMY JONES***

A small but charming town in the UK, set among stunning countryside, is also surprisingly home to a 700-year-old castle and an impressive aqueduct that sits 70ft above a majestic river.

It might be easy to overlook Chirk in Wales, near the Shropshire border and just 10 miles south of Wrexham. Sure, it has a few independent shops, cosy pubs and hotels, but for years tourists have actually been flocking to the region to admire the rather eye-catching Chirk Aqueduct and Viaduct.

The Canal & River Trust describes it as “canal architecture at its finest”, noting that it’s “one of only a few places on our waterways where you can stand with one foot in England and one foot in Wales as it straddles the border between the two countries”.

The 220m (720ft-long) aqueduct, designed by William Jessop and Thomas Telford and completed in 1801, is part of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Llangollen Canal World Heritage site.

This stretches from Chirk to the Horseshoe Falls in Llangollen itself – 1.43km of the canal leads through Chirk Bank to Gledrid Bridge and is also a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

It carries the Llangollen Canal 70ft above the River Ceiriog, and the viaduct, part of the bridge adjacent to the aqueduct, was created by Henry Robertson in 1848.

A feat of engineering, it carries the railway over valleys and boasts 10 large arches, each spanning approximately 12 metres (40 feet).

Just a few minutes' walk from Chirk centre, visitors can stroll along the towpath

beside the canal (aqueduct) and through the surrounding tunnels.

Of course for those who'd prefer to take to the water, there are also plenty of kayak and canoe tours available in the area. And what better way is there to admire the sprawling valley views?

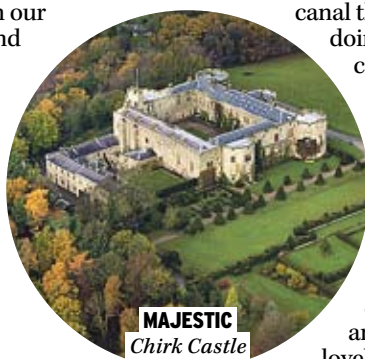
Visitors have long praised the incredible structures, with one sharing online: “Impressive aqueduct with some lovely views. Also has a train viaduct next to it. You can walk across if you don't mind heights!”

A second commented: “Amazing engineering for the time. The walk along the canal through the tunnel is worth doing. If you like walking, continue on to the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. Even more amazing.”

Another marked it as a “must see in Chirk” and wrote: “Parked at the nearby cafe Wylfa for refreshments and then walked over to see the aqueduct and viaduct – amazing architecture and lovely views.”

While one more added: “Had a great walk along the canal and view from the aqueduct, and a great experience when a narrow boat comes along as you are walking over the aqueduct.”

But Chirk Aqueduct and Viaduct isn't the only magnificent feature of this small Welsh town, as it also has a rather beautiful 13th-century castle.



MAJESTIC
Chirk Castle



CLEVER
Bridge next
to aqueduct



HISTORY
700-year-old
building



ALL ABOARD
Canal tunnel

The Grade I-listed medieval fortress was originally built for King Edward I as a form of defence and was completed in 1310. The castle was later converted into a stately home, but is today owned by the National Trust.

Visitors can wander around the state rooms, which feature grand interiors and collections, including its 17th-century long gallery and 18th-century saloon with tapestries, a servants' hall, library, and even a 1920s-style bow room.

And the grounds surrounding the castle are just as magnificent. There are more than 480 acres of estate land, which is home to wild ponies and sheep.

Elsewhere, there are manicured gardens

spanning more than five acres, with a charming terrace offering views across the rural countryside. Recent visitors of the castle have noted its impressive features, as one wrote on another online review site:

“Chirk Castle is a beautifully maintained National Trust castle high on a hill overlooking spectacular countryside. We were fortunate to visit on a lovely day, which showed it off brilliantly. I was particularly fascinated by the restoration work going on in the library while visitors were present. The skill on show and willingness to discuss the work was first-class. Indeed, all the staff I spoke to were excellent.”

A second shared: “We had a great time visiting Chirk. An incredible site with so much to see and do, we barely scratched the surface. I'll happily return one day.”

For more information visit canalrivertrust.org.uk and chirk.com.

***‘Over 480 acres of castle grounds,
home to wild ponies and sheep’***

Bright ideas for fun in Europe's sunniest spot

WINNING GOLD
Playa de las
Teresitas



By **JULIE DELAHAYE**

Winter well and truly arrived in the UK this year, with snow and howling gales, but if you're someone who dreads those frosty mornings, the good news is you don't need to jet to the other side of the world for warmer climates. And there's one European destination that needs to be on your radar.

Tenerife has been named Europe's sunniest winter destination, boasting over 800 hours of winter sunshine. The Canary Islands are already firm favourites with sun seekers thanks to their year-round balmy temperatures, but Tenerife

volcanic landscape, which is a Unesco World Heritage Site. And there is the island's beautiful Botanical Gardens in Puerto de la Cruz.

For wildlife fans, winter can also offer up some of the best opportunities for whale watching, as the majestic creatures make an appearances between November through to May.

Plenty of hotels and restaurants are still open even though it's low season, so you won't get the party crowds of summer, but it's not completely quiet either.

It's worth noting that the bigger clubs and bars often remain closed, so the winter vibe is more laidback compared to the school holidays.

So it's really no surprise Tenerife was recently named Europe's best destination for sunshine, in a study from Luxury France Tours.

The largest of the Canaries took the top spot with more than 800 hours of sunshine which according to researchers, make it "the brightest winter escape in Europe".

If you're after sunshine, Spain in general is worth having on your radar, in fact, eight out of the top 10 destinations were in Spain. You can check out the full list below for an extra dose of inspiration.

OTHERWORLDLY
Visit Teide
National Park



VOLCANIC SANDS
Playa Jardin



stands out, with the mercury hitting 20-21C across January and February.

And while it might not feel warm enough to swim in the sea, it is perfect for a walk along the sand – and Tenerife has plenty of beautiful beaches to enjoy.

The likes of Playa de las Vistas and Playa de las Teresitas are often crowded during the summer, but come winter they're relatively quiet, so you can enjoy the views or stroll along the soft sands.

For something a little different, Playa Jardin with its black volcanic sands, can make for a striking photo backdrop too.

Another perk is that while it will be warm enough to explore, it won't be so hot that you might struggle if you're eyeing up a hike – or need to wake up at the crack of dawn before temperatures soar.

The weather is ideal for getting to know otherworldly Teide National Park, with its

EUROPE'S SUNNIEST DESTINATIONS

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● Find out more at luxuryfrancetours.com



STEP TOO FAR
Whitby's
199 steps

Yorkshire's seaside split personality

On a trip down memory lane, **EMILY HEWARD** revisits the wildly different and still wonderful resorts of Whitby and Scarborough for a tale of two coasts

It may not have the tourist hordes of Cornwall or Instagram hotspots of Dorset, but Yorkshire's coastline is undoubtedly one of the UK's most beautiful.

Growing up in God's Own County, I have fond childhood memories of holidays at the seaside resorts scattered along the edge of the North York Moors. Now, with a small child of my own, nostalgia had been nagging at me to return.

So with the grandparents in tow for the full family reboot, we booked a half-term holiday with two of our favourite spots on the itinerary.

Whitby and Scarborough are regularly voted among the UK's best seaside towns.

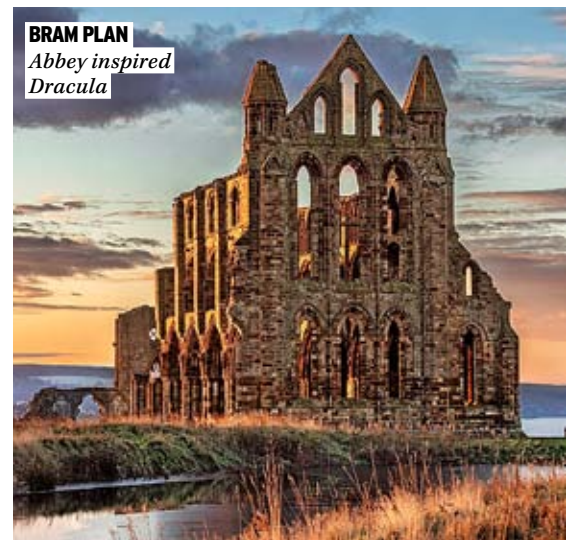
But while there might be only 20 miles separating them, they're worlds apart with their distinct charm and character.

Whitby, with its jumble of steep cobbled streets and terracotta rooftops backdropping its picturesque port, is a magnet for literature lovers and Goths thanks to the dramatic cliff-top abbey ruins that inspired Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

Scarborough, meanwhile, offers a more traditional British seaside experience perfect for families, with its wide sandy beaches and promenade lined with amusements and ice cream parlours.

We spent our first day in Whitby, parking up by the marina and stopping to admire the full-scale replica of HMS Endeavour – the ship on which Captain Cook made his first voyage in 1768. Previously a visitor attraction, it's now home to The Whitby Endeavour, a floating

BRAM PLAN
Abbey inspired
Dracula



'Worlds apart with their distinct charm and character'



NOSTALGIC
Emily back
in Whitby



SCARBADOS
Scarborough's
South Bay



PASSPORT ALERT FOR TRAVELLING TO EU COUNTRIES

By **NATALIE KING**
One passport rule continues to catch out Brits every summer – and it leaves them having their trips delayed or cancelled, as they're unable to board the plane.

Checking your passport now means you can avoid a last-minute rush to the Passport Office days before your holiday.

Pre-Brexit, if you sent off your passport for renewal and it still had some remaining validity, up to nine months could be transferred to your new passport. This meant some Brits would have adult passports valid for 10 years and nine months. At the time, the passport could be used for the entire duration of its validity when travelling in the EU.

However since Brexit a new rule means Brits must have passports issued less than 10 years before the date they entered the



country. Even if your passport is still valid for the time of travel, if it was issued more than 10 years ago then you won't be able to travel to the EU.

Passports need to be valid for at least three months after the day you plan to fly back from EU countries, while some non-EU destinations will ask for six.

It's much quicker to sort out a passport renewal this time of year rather than in the peak summer months.

For an adult passport, renewing online costs £94.50. If you need a passport at the last minute, the price goes up to £178 for a fast track one week renewal, or £222 to use the one day premium service. So check your passport now to avoid last-minute stress and a dent in your wallet.

restaurant and bar. We'd set our sights on lunch elsewhere. Over the road is Trenchers, the town's famous fish and chip restaurant that's just been named one of the UK's best. My family has been coming here for four generations, ever since it opened in 1980, and while The Magpie Cafe around the corner may attract longer queues and more critical acclaim, our loyalty has never wavered.

Inside, we found it as comfortably nostalgic as ever with its dark green leather booths, marble-topped tables and waiting staff zipping around in their uniforms.

The food was slow to arrive but worth the wait. My medium cod and chips (£19.95) was so big it barely fit on the plate. The pearly, perfectly flaking fish was coated with a crisp batter as golden and bubbly as honeycomb and the giant helping of chips had the depth of flavour only a fry in beef dripping can bestow.

My next stop on memory lane was to buy one of the town's famous Lucky Duck souvenirs for my daughter, like the one I'd loved as a child. Sadly the Whitby Glass gift shop in Sandgate, where the tiny handmade glass duck figurines were sold for 68 years, closed last summer. But we found them still on sale in Rainbow Shells and Gems in Haggarsgate.

We then crossed the swing bridge over the River Esk into the East Side's old town. Strolling its quaint cobbled streets, we stopped for treats from Roly's Fudge and admired the jewellers dealing in jet, Whitby's famous black gemstone.

From this side of town, you can also climb the 199 steps up to St Mary's Church and the Abbey headland. Having my four-year-old with me was a convenient excuse to park that particular pilgrimage. Instead, we bought an ice cream and headed along Henrietta Street to Fortune's Kippers, the 150-year-old smokehouse and shop that has sold its herrings to everyone from Rick Stein and Mary Berry to Princess Anne.

Our luck had run out – so had the kippers. They'd sold out for the day and shut up shop by the time we got there. So we finished our day hunting for shells on Tate Hill Beach, the small and secluded bay on this side of the Esk.

On the other, there's a longer, sandier Blue Flag beach perfect for sandcastles and donkey rides in summer, overlooked by the town's famous Whalebone Arch up on the West Cliff.

Day two took us to Scarborough, a town that has



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The Grand
Hotel



COOK BOOK
Replica of HMS
Endeavour



GOLDEN DAYS
Whitby pier

been much maligned over the years. Critics have called it "run-down" and it's true it's one of the more deprived parts of North Yorkshire. But as a visitor destination, Britain's first seaside resort still has so much to offer. The South Bay is where you'll find most of the action, with a promenade packed with amusement arcades, chippies and souvenir shops.

Over a century and a half on from its Victorian heyday, much of the era's splendour remains. Towering above the seafront is the majestic Grand Hotel (now sadly in the hands of Britannia, rated the UK's worst hotel chain for 12 years in a row by Which?), next to the cliffside St Nicholas Gardens.

Between them, the Central Tramway funicular shuttles visitors up and down the steep cliff. In the distance, the ruins of medieval Scarborough Castle stand sentinel on the headland dividing it from the North Bay.

It was a crisp, cloudless day when we visited and

we spent hours on the sand, building castles and chasing waves gently lapping at the shore.

It wasn't long before the bright lights of the amusement arcades lured us in and we whiled away some more time dripping two-pence pieces into the coin pushers at Olympia Leisure. Is any childhood complete without this questionably young introduction to gambling?

After lunch at the Golden Grid seafood restaurant overlooking the harbour, we enjoyed another blast from the past at the Harbour Bar. The retro ice cream parlour opened in 1945 and is untouched by time.

The diner-style interior looks exactly the same as I remember it as a kid: a cheery yellow vortex of vinyl, chrome and Formica. We took a seat at the central bar and split a lemon-lime ice cream float and a Cherry Amour – a gigantic sundae piled high with chocolate sauce and black cherries.

We ran out of daylight hours to visit the North Bay, where there's a quieter stretch of sand as well as the Sea Life aquarium and Scarborough Open Air Theatre, which has established itself as one of the north's premier gig venues in recent years. Next year's calendar includes the likes of CMAT, Rick Astley, Richard Ashcroft, James Taylor, Nile Rodgers and Chic.

Just over the road from the theatre is Peasholm Park, which is well worth a visit for a row on its dragon boats and a stroll through its Japanese-themed gardens.

WHERE WE STAYED

We based ourselves near Dalby Forest, at a farmhouse hunkered deep in a valley so comically remote the directions came with a series of photos of farm tracks and gates, scrawled-on arrows pointing the way. The breathtaking drive took us through the forest, the trees ablaze with autumn colours. About half an hour from Scarborough near Thornton-le-Dale, Thompson Rigg Farmhouse was a beautifully-appointed family home.

We booked through Sykes Cottages and it cost us £743 for three nights in October half-term. It was a blissfully serene setting to return to from our day trips, with a bubbling hot tub waiting under an inky black sky – perfect for stargazing.

In our desperation to escape the British weather, it can be all too tempting to book a cheap package holiday somewhere sunny.

ON THE BLUNT HUNT

Chelsea pub The Fox and Pheasant

**SHARP SINGER**

James Blunt

**POPULAR**

High-end dining

**CAPTAIN FAMOUS**

Beautiful cocktails

**TUCK IN**

Dinner is off the charts

On the hunt for a pint with Blunt

Superstar singer James Blunt has made a real go of his posh London pub and **MILO BOYD** manages to grab a table to see what all the fuss is about

Say what you like about his music, but you can't argue with James Blunt. He's become the target of a mountain of putdown tweets and snide comments over the years – but his replies are never short of beautiful. “What has James Blunt achieved?” one troll sneered at him online.

“They named a ski ride after me in Verbier and turned a phone box into a museum for me in Herefordshire. Your turn,” he quipped back.

Since worming into the ears of every British person alive with 2005's smash *You're Beautiful*, the self-acclaimed “one hit wonder” merchant has done a roaring trade in poking fun at himself. And also, I discovered, in the pub business.

Brit award-winner Mr Blunt, 51, is one of a host of big names who have branched out from their craft to get into the pub game.

From the outside, getting involved with pubs is not an obvious move. In fact, it is a terrible time to be a publican.

The British Beer and Pub Association estimates that there were 378 closures in 2025, potentially impacting 5,600 jobs.

Thankfully, Rachel Reeves U-turned on cutting business rate relief for boozers, which has been welcomed by publicans, but the extent of the tax break remains uncertain, as does the future of a trade hit from all sides.

But while I am not privy to the finances of The Fox and Pheasant, I am confident it's doing just fine.

On a miserable January weekend, deep in Dry January, the Chelsea joint was heaving.

I had snatched up the weekend's last free table with the contractual promise to buy at least two mains and pay £20 if I didn't show.

The table in question was tucked in the corner of the room by the waiting station, affording better views of my fellow diners and condiment stand access than it did space. By

my rough estimate, The Fox and Pheasant has 40 covers. If each forked out as much as we did, it is a sound investment from Mr Blunt.

My friend and I paid £106 for one starter, two mains and five pints. Maybe to be expected when dining in one of the UK's most expensive postcodes.

As a day-tripper to these rarefied ends, the bill left a bitter taste in the mouth.

“I think £40 less than that feels about fair,” concluded my mate, who has spent years working in restaurants across London. That is not to say that The Fox and Pheasant, on Billing Road, is not a great pub. That is undeniable.

The 19th century venue is nestled in the backstreets behind Stamford Bridge, home of Chelsea FC. Fulham Broadway is your closest tube station, a six-minute walk away.

Walking in off the gated, private street that Mr Blunt has called home for more than 15 years, you are treated to a tastefully decorated frontage, baskets of blooms and green wall tiles.

The layout is particularly smart. The front section is dedicated to the double-sided bar and drinking area.

It is a bustling, cosy spot to shelter on a cold winter's evening, particularly if you are lucky enough to score a space next to the roaring fire. And it's dog-friendly too.

The majority of the dining is tucked away in a large room at the back, a smart move that preserves the pub feel of the front. The dining area is light and lovely, crowned with a conservatory-style ceiling and trellises of vegetation on the wall. Concerned about the

**COSY** A dogfight for the prime seats by the fire**NO.1 TESTER**

Milo enjoys a pint

‘On a miserable January weekend, deep in Dry January, the Chelsea joint was heaving’

price, we shared a celeriac tartare with tomato relish, hazelnut cream and horseradish starter.

“Is it just me or does this taste like they have dunked celeriac bits in a tin of baked beans?” asked my mate.

The mains packed more of a punch. For me, a Roquefort salad with chips. For my friend, a chicken, chorizo and mushroom pie with creamed leeks and a perfect Mr Whippy-esque swirl of mashed potatoes.

While the pie was small, the flavours were delicious, the service prompt and vibes good.

There is also something quite aspirational about dining in a restaurant made up of 6ft 2in

City types and impeccably dressed women. Although finding only one vegetarian option beyond the salads on the menu was a little disappointing. As was not spotting the pub's famous owner.

It is rumoured Mr Blunt does frequent the pub and by all accounts he's done a good job running The Fox and Pheasant since saving it from being turned into flats in 2018.

The only hint of the 23 million album-selling crooner was to be found in the cocktail menu.

Had I not already emptied my wallet, I would have found out if the “You're Beautiful” concoction is as much of a runaway hit.



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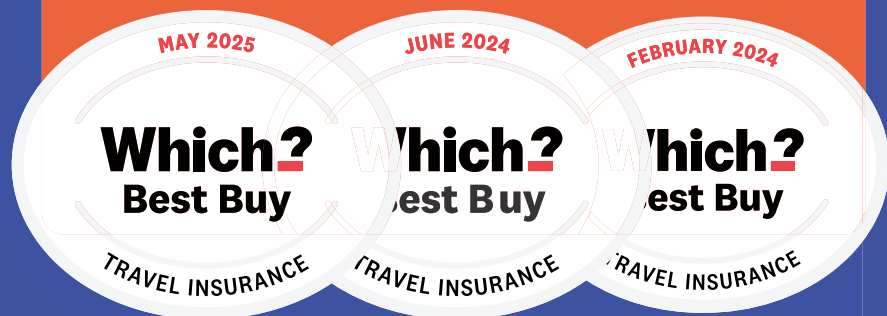


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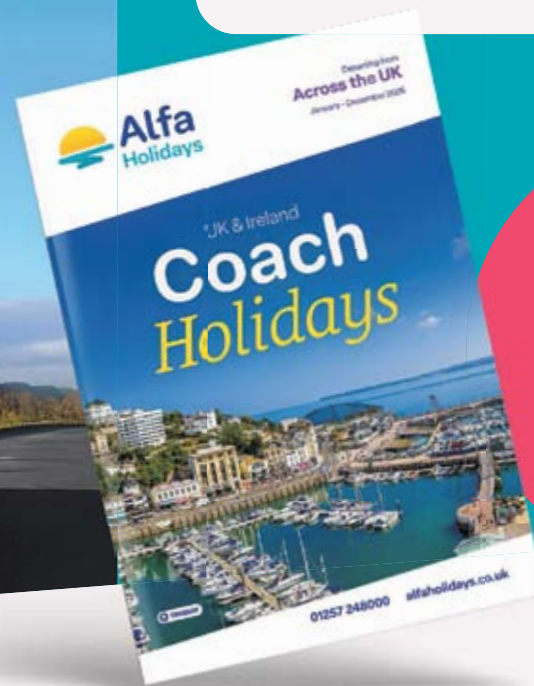
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FOOD FEED YOUR SOUL

Brought to you by Good Food's Food Director, **CASSIE BEST**

Poetry on a plate with the ultimate Burns Night feast

It's Burns Night tomorrow, which feels like the perfect excuse to celebrate all things Scottish. Whether you're donning a kilt or just raising a glass, it's a great moment to cook up some proper hearty scran. I'm starting with a warming bowl of neeps and tatties soup, before moving on to comforting Balmoral chicken, finished with a splash of whisky and served alongside crispy potato cakes. To finish, it has to be cranachan, a gloriously crunchy, creamy dessert. This version is packed with baked oats, sweet pears and juicy blackberries, making it a lovely way to round off the evening. Slàinte!



NEEPS & TATTIES SOUP

PREP: 15 MINS • COOK: 35 MINS • EASY

Enjoy a taste of Scotland with our warming soup made with swede, potato and haggis topping. It's Burns Night in a bowl

- 25g butter
- ¼ tsp ground coriander
- 1 onion, chopped
- ½ medium-sized swede (about 200g), peeled and chopped into small pieces
- 1 carrot, sliced
- 1 celery stick, sliced into small pieces
- 140g potatoes, chopped into small pieces
- Good grating of nutmeg
- 400ml milk
- 140g cooked haggis or black pudding, chopped or crumbled into pieces
- 2tbsp double cream
- A few celery leaves, torn

1 Melt the butter in a large saucepan over a medium heat. Add the coriander and the vegetables, fry for 4-5 mins, then cover with 400ml water and bring to the boil. Cook until all the vegetables are soft - around 20-25 mins.

2 Season with salt, pepper and nutmeg, then add the milk. Transfer to a blender or blitz with a stick blender until smooth, then return to the pan to heat through. (For a really smooth consistency, push the mixture through a sieve after blending.) Check the seasoning and add a little more salt and nutmeg, if you like.

3 Meanwhile, heat the cooked haggis or black pudding in a frying pan until sizzling. Serve the soup in bowls and top with the haggis or black pudding, a swirl of double cream and the celery leaves.



**BALMORAL CHICKEN****PREP: 20 MINS • COOK: 35 MINS PLUS 1 HR****CHILLING • SERVES 4 • EASY***Make a traditional Scottish dish, named after Balmoral Castle in Aberdeenshire*

- 2 chicken breasts
- 10 slices of streaky bacon
- 150g haggis

1 Get two pieces of baking parchment ready, both the same size and about double the width of the chicken breast. Put one on a chopping board or surface with the chicken on top, and cover with the second piece of

parchment. Using a rolling pin, bash the chicken breast until around 3cm thick.

2 Lay 5 rashers of streaky bacon horizontally on top of a piece of the reserved parchment. Lay the flattened chicken breast on top of the bacon vertically. Put up to 75g or a couple of tablespoons of haggis in the centre of the butterflied chicken breast, in a log shape. Repeat the process with the second chicken breast. Carefully roll each breast up as tightly as possible. Chill for at least 1 hour, or up to 24 hours.

3 Heat the oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4. Carefully unwrap the chicken, making

sure the bacon is intact and the chicken is tightly rolled seam-side down to hold the haggis in place. Tightly wrap in foil, then put on a baking tray and cook for 20 mins.

4 Remove the chicken from the oven, and leave to cool in the foil for a few minutes. Turn the oven up to 200C/180C fan/gas 6.

5 Using heatproof gloves, carefully remove the foil, making sure none of the bacon comes off, and put the chicken back on a baking tray in the oven for 15 mins, or until the bacon is crisp. Remove from the oven and leave to rest for 5 mins before slicing and serving with the potato cakes.

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PARSLEY POTATO CAKES**PREP: 30 MINS • COOK: 35 MINS • PLUS AT LEAST 1 HR COOLING • SERVES 4 • EASY***Enjoy these herby potato cakes with our Balmoral chicken, whisky sauce and pan-roasted kale for a perfect Burns Night menu*

- 600g Maris Piper potatoes, cut into 2cm cubes
- 2tbsp (about 30g) butter, plus extra to serve (optional)
- 35g finely chopped parsley

1 Cook the potatoes in a large pan of boiling salted water until just tender, about 6-8 mins. Drain and leave to cool in the colander. Tip back into the pan with the butter and parsley, and mash until everything is combined, then season well. Leave to cool completely, about 30-45 mins.

2 Once cool, form the potato cakes by taking a small handful of the mixture at a time and making them into puck-sized patties, weighing about 50-60g each. Put them on a tray and chill for at least 30 mins to firm up. Will keep chilled for up to 24 hours.

3 Heat a non-stick pan and fry the potato cakes (there is no need to use any oil) until they have formed a lovely bronze crust on each side. This should take 2-4 mins on each side, depending on how crispy you like them. Be careful not to overload the pan so you can easily flip them.

4 Serve the potato cakes piping hot (you can keep them warm in a low oven if you are prepping other elements of the meal in the meantime) and with a bit of extra butter on top, if you like.

**PEAR & BLACKBERRY CRANACHAN****PREP: 15 MINS • COOK: 30 MINS PLUS 1 HR COOLING • SERVES 4 • EASY***Assemble these just before guests arrive and keep chilled. It's a wonderful Scottish dessert*

- 4 pears
- 150g blackberries
- 1-2tsp golden caster sugar
- 1tsp ground cinnamon
- 100g oats
- 5-6tbsp heather honey (regular honey is fine if you can't find it), plus extra to serve
- 400ml double cream
- 3tbsp whisky

1 Peel the pears, remove the core and chop into 1cm chunks. Tip the pear chunks into a small saucepan over a low heat, and stir in the blackberries, sugar and cinnamon. Cook for 20-25 mins until the fruit begins to break down, gently crushing it with the back of a spoon to create a compote. Adjust sweetness by adding more sugar. Cool completely, for about 30 mins.

2 Toast the oats with the honey in a small dry pan over a medium-low heat, stirring constantly until they turn golden, about 3-4 mins. Spread the toasted oats out evenly over a baking sheet or sheet of baking parchment, and leave to cool, for about 30 mins. Once cooled, break the clumps into smaller pieces. The compote and oats can be prepared up to 24 hours ahead.

3 Whisk the cream with the whisky and a drizzle of honey, if you want a slightly sweeter flavour, until soft peaks form. To assemble, spoon a layer of fruit compote into four serving bowls, followed by the oats, then the cream. Repeat until filled.

While many garden plants are still dormant in January, a handful of well-placed plants and shrubs can scent the air even on the coldest days. Especially when planted where you naturally pass them. Think front paths, doorways, side gates and walkways.

Choose plants that flower in winter, and you can turn quick trips outside into an uplifting experience.

DAPHNE (DAPHNE BHOLOUA/DAPHNE ODORA)

Daphne is one of the finest winter-scented shrubs you can grow, with late January being when its perfume can be the most rewarding.

The fragrance is sweet but fresh, often with a citrus note which carries well on still afternoons. Plant Daphnes in a warm, sheltered spot in light shade, with evenly moist, free-draining soil that isn't waterlogged. Keep the roots cool with a mulch, and avoid moving it once planted, as it dislikes disturbance.

Learn more about caring for these on my YouTube channel, @daviddomoney.



lingers in enclosed spaces. It copes well with dry shade and urban conditions, making it useful for gaps near walls, under trees or beside a shady path. Once established, it's tidy and wonderfully low-maintenance.

WINTER-FLOWERING HONEYSUCKLE (LONICERA FRAGRANTISSIMA)

For a plant that announces itself in winter, this is a top choice. Lonicera fragrantissima produces creamy-white flowers on bare stems, and the scent is bold and unmistakable when you walk past.

It suits sun or partial shade and tolerates most soils, making it a reliable performer in mixed borders. After flowering, you can trim it lightly to shape, but it rarely needs much intervention.



WITCH HAZEL (HAMAMELIS X INTERMEDIA)

Witch hazel provides structure and scent, with ribbon-like flowers opening along bare branches in winter. The fragrance is warm and spicy, and is often strongest on mild days after frost.

Give it sun or light shade, and avoid the most exposed, windy positions so the display isn't spoiled. It prefers acidic to neutral soil, but it can be grown in a large container using ericaceous compost if your garden is alkaline.

Make sure you choose a cultivar which is



SWEET BOX (SARCOCOCCA CONFUSA)

For shaded gardens, sweet box is a gem, as its scent is powerful even when the flowers are small. The fragrance is rich and sweet, often compared to vanilla, and it



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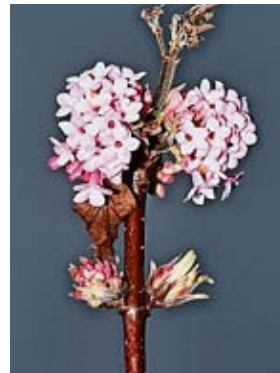
There are varieties you can rely on to perfume winter air and boost your spirits as you pass by

known for fragrance, as some are more strongly scented than others.

VIBURNUM 'DAWN' (VIBURNUM X BODNANTENSE 'DAWN')

For some real front garden impact, "Dawn" is hard to beat, flowering through winter into early spring with clusters of soft pink blooms.

The scent can travel surprisingly far on calm



days, making it perfect to position near a front path or driveway.

It's also tolerant of most soils and will cope in many positions, although some sun helps the perfume lift.

Over time, it will become a substantial shrub, so allow it some room to develop a more natural shape.

If it's needed, you can prune it gently after flowering to keep it in bounds without losing next year's display.

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Witch hazel



NEW DAWN
Viburnum bodnantense 'Dawn'

FOCUS ON

SALIX CAPREA (GOAT WILLOW)



Salix caprea is one of the most cheerful sights in a winter garden. Its soft, silvery catkins appear while so much else is still asleep. This time of year, those furry catkins bring real texture to bare stems, and they're a valuable early resource for wildlife. Give it sun or light shade and soil that remains reasonably moist, and it will cope better than many shrubs on heavier ground. It's also lovely to enjoy in low winter light, thanks to how the catkins glow.

There are some excellent UK-friendly choices. Salix caprea 'Kilmarnock' (syn. 'Pendula') is the classic option for small gardens, forming a compact, top-grafted weeping umbrella that works beautifully by a path or in a large patio pot. For extra winter structure, Salix caprea 'Curly Locks' adds wonderfully twisted stems as well as catkins.

Enjoy catkins now, then prune after flowering to maintain shape and encourage fresh growth.

Fun fact: Goat willow is dioecious, so male and female flowers grow on separate plants. On male trees, catkins often start grey-silver then turn yellow when ripe with pollen.



DID YOU KNOW?

Blonde hedgehogs do occur naturally, and the pale colour is linked to leucism, a rare pigmentation trait caused by genetic variation.

Unlike albinism, leucistic animals may still show some normal colour in the eyes and skin.



Winter aconite (Eranthis hyemalis) carries its story in the name. Eranthis comes from Greek elements meaning "spring" and "flower", while hyemalis means "of winter" or "winter-flowering". It's fitting for a plant that pushes up bright blooms when most borders are still bare.

Alder has pale wood that can turn a vivid orange when cut, which once looked like "bleeding". That striking colour change fed old fears around the tree, and Irish folklore said it was unlucky to pass an alder on a journey.

Snowdrops (Galanthus nivalis) have a wonderfully musical name in Switzerland. They're called Amselblum, meaning "blackbird flower", because they bloom as the amsel (blackbird) begins to sing its song again.



TOP 5 GARDENING JOBS

- 1 Place marker canes beside emerging bulbs, especially where you cut corners on paths or work close to borders. A simple cane or label helps you avoid treading on shoots or damaging them when weeding or edging.
- 2 Loosen compact gravel around stepping stones on a mild, frost-free day, using a hand fork or small rake to level it back out. This improves drainage and reduces the slick build-up that thrives in damp, compacted areas.
- 3 Remove all the frozen debris from the gutter guards only when it has thawed, so you don't crack plastic or bend fixings. Clear all the leaves and twigs from the shed and greenhouse guttering too, so winter rain runs



freely into water butts instead of spilling onto paths.

- 4 Check for lifted paving and rock slabs after freeze-thaw, especially on main routes and near steps. If anything feels uneven, mark the spot and plan a proper reset when conditions are drier, keeping winter walkways safer.

- 5 Lift lanterns and ornaments off damp soil and stand them on bricks or pot feet to improve airflow and drainage. This reduces staining, rust and frost damage, particularly where items sit in soggy corners.





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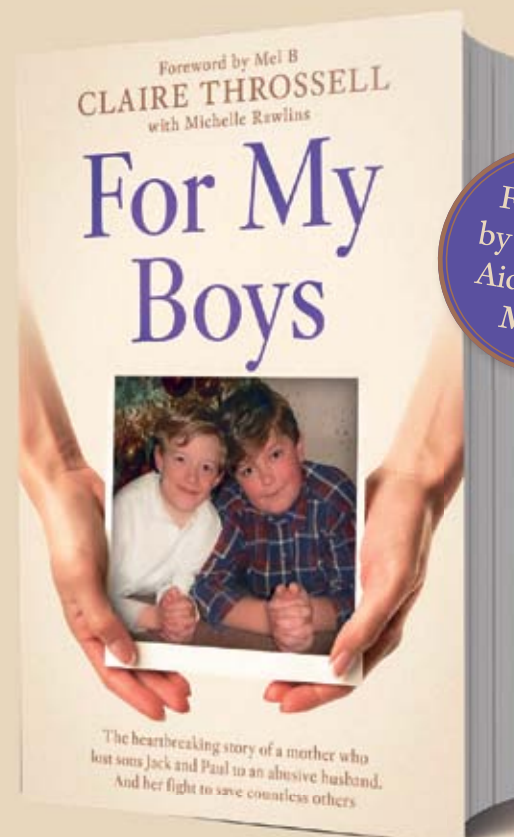


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Barclays	480¼	-5¼
GSK	1801	-3½
HSBC Holdings	1231	-13¼
Int Consolidated Airlines	418¼	-12
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Private sector 'encouraging' despite gloom in hospitality

THE UK's private sector expanded at the fastest rate in nearly two years in January.

However, the reeling hospitality sector was feeling the fallout of Labour policy.

The latest Flash Purchasing Managers Index from S&P Global showed a major uptick in the all-important services sector – often seen as the engine of the economy – making up over 80% of output.

January data showed a “sustained improvement” in new order intakes across the private sector, with business optimism at its highest level since before the 2024 autumn Budget.

Chris Williamson, chief business economist at S&P, said: “UK business kicked up a gear in January, showing encouraging resilience in the face of recent geopolitical tensions.”

The PMI showed a reading of 53.9, up from 51.4 and maintaining a steady level above the 50.0 threshold, which indicates whether a sector is growing or receding.

Williamson said growth was supported by a recovering manufacturing sector as well as strong performances from financial services and technology.

High levels of optimism, however, were tempered by persisting cost inflation.

S&P said rising cost pressures triggered

By **Samuel Norman**

the greatest increase in average prices charged by private sector companies since August 2025.

Williamson said an upturn in order books failed to stem the flow of the cost crunch, leading to a “steep loss of jobs” as firms face pressure to balance the books.

He added: “These cost pressures were again often linked to government policies relating to higher national insurance contributions and the national minimum wage, and led to an especially steep drop in hospitality jobs.”

The government has been urged to up its support for the hospitality sector after a major blunder on business rates reform left the industry reeling.

Ministers U-turned on the package earlier this week, but announced that pubs would be the only businesses to benefit from tax relief.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves told the World Economic Forum on Wednesday: “The situation the pubs face is different from other parts of the hospitality sector but we will be setting out the detail in the next few days.”



Chris Williamson
warns over jobs



Store chain survived crisis

Poundland aims to cash in as closure drive ends

POUNDLAND has said its major restructure – which saw it shut nearly 150 shops and axe 2,200 jobs – has finished, but that it still has “much to do” to get back on track.

The troubled discount retailer, which secured approval last August from the High Court for its plan, confirmed it

ended the year with 651 sites, down from around 800. Its workforce shrank from 14,200 to about 12,000.

In an update yesterday, Poundland said the large-scale closures were over. “Any future closures will be a consequence of standard business-as-usual lease events,” it said. Figures for

Christmas trading showed like-for-like underlying sales dropped 2.9%.

Managing director Barry Williams said: “While there has been significant progress as we re-energise the business, we know we still have much to do.”

It is simplifying its offering, returning to £1, £2 and £3 grocery pricing.

MUSK EYES STELLAR SPACE X LISTING



Billionaire Elon Musk could be looking to take his Space X public

ELON Musk's Space X is in discussions with banks over a potential listing that could be one of the biggest market debuts ever.

The space exploration and transport giant is looking to pick from Wall Street financiers for senior roles on a mooted initial public offering, the FT said.

The firm – headed by Tesla billionaire Musk – has not

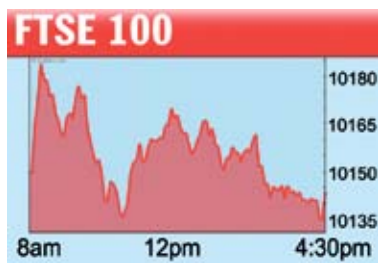
publicly confirmed IPO plans. Nonetheless, preparations mark the clearest sign yet that a listing is moving from speculation to planning.

Space X is among the world's most valuable private companies. Secondary share sales reportedly value it as high as £590bn. Reuters previously reported the firm could seek to raise over \$25bn in an IPO.

++ THE FTSE 100 THE FTSE 100 THE FTSE 100 ++

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
3i Group	3289	+16	4459	2999
A.B. Foods	1879½	-4½	2337	1838
Admiral Group	1272	-8	1324	1050
Airtel Africa	360¼	-1¼	372¾	126
Alliance Trust	1272	-8	1324	1050
Anglo American	3378	+36	3434	2003¼
Antofagasta	3584	+67	3665	1383
Ashtead Group	5228½	-14	5594	3659
AstraZeneca	13580	+20	14346	9667
Auto Trader	568½	+¼	908½	555½
Aviva	619½	-33¼	692½	491
Babcock International	1454	-10	1502	503
BAE Systems	2027	+42	2093	1180½
Barclays	480¼	-5¼	489	241¼
Barratt Development	382½	-	482¼	350
Beazley Group	1152	+36	1170	769
Berkley Grp Hldgs	4016	-16	4324	3524
BP	443¾	+6¼	476¼	331¼
British Amer.Tob	4328½	+15	4421	2965
British Land	409¾	-1	420½	321¼
BT Group	188¼	+1½	222¾	139½
Bunzl	2058	-34	3452	1989
Burberry Group	1195½	-79	1371½	627¼
Centrica	184	+2½	184	132¼
Coca-Cola HBC	3890	-18	4034	2762
Compass Group	2239½	-16	2843	2211
Convatec Group	234	-2½	295½	221¼
CRH	9020	-104	9704	6142
Croda International	2764	-41	3383	2465
DCC	4588	+18	5600	4350
Diageo	1675	-20	2503½	1577
Diploma	5525½	-25	5685	3624
EasyJet	482	-14¼	587¾	427½
Entain	671¾	-5½	1022	501¼
Experian Group	3029½	+13	4088	3004
F&C Inv Tst	1244½	-11	1272	962
Flutter Entert	12990	-360	23630	12890
Fresnillo	4168	+84	4190	657

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Games Workshop	17830#	-110	19840	12410
GlaxoSmithKline	1801	-3½	1901½	1264
Glencore	501	+10¾	501	230
Haleon	379¾	+1¼	415¼	326½
Halma	3638#	-58	3710	2360
Hikma	1554	-14	2340	1507
Hiscox	1508	+4	1523	1035
HSBC Holdings	1231	-13¼	1244¼	713¼
IMI	2712	-20	2732	1606
Imperial Brands	3024	-23	3312	2627
Informa	913¼	-23¾	993½	640¼
InterContinental Htl	10080¼	-3789¼	10231	5462½
Intermediate Cap.Grp	1916	-24	2450	1569
Intertek Group	4534	-30	5385	4064
Intl Consolidated Airlines	418¼	-12	437	224½
JD Sports	823¼	-2	104½	63¼
Kingfisher	319¼	-4½	329¾	238½
Land Securities	637½	-3½	654	499½
Legal & General	2581¼	-	267¼	215¼
Lloyds Banking Grp	101¾	-¼	102½	61¼
London & Stamford Prop	200	+½	204½	170½
London Stock Ex	8768	+44	12095	8138



COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
M&G	301¼	-3¼	307	172¾
Marks & Spencer	361	-¼	411¼	318½
Melrose	635	+3	680	386
Mondi	874¼	-3½	1326	819
National Grid	1191½	+5	1201½	919¾
NatWest Group	646½	-6¼	665½	411¼
Next	13440	-50	14580	9336
Pearson	969	+4½	1379	929¼
Pershing Square Hold.	4550	-82	5090	3244
Persimmon	1406	-5½	1415½	1037½
Phoenix Group	722	-2½	748½	499¼
Prudential	1149½	-22	1195½	652
Reckitt Benckiser	6018	-96	6228	4633
RELX	2921	-4	4135	2898
Rentokil Initial	480¼	+2	482	309½
Rightmove	507	+2¾	823¼	494½
Rio Tinto	6576	+90	6641	4117
Rolls-Royce Group	1253	+9	1305	582¾
Sage Group	1029#	+6½	1348	1013½
Sainsbury (J)	313	-3	355¾	228¼
Schroders	456¾	-5¼	467	289¼
Scottish Mortgage	1210	+3	1215½	815¼
SEGRO	729½	-5½	751½	599
Severn Trent	2814	-16	2907	2370
Shell	2687½	+13½	2931½	2291½
Smith & Nephew	1225½	-10	1435	937¼
Smiths Group	2618	-	2628	1687
Smurfit Kappa	3054	-83	4462	2558
Spirax-Sarco	7165	-205	8190	5445
SSE	2322#	-6	2363	1463½
St James's Place	1491½	-19½	1516	791
Standard Chartered	1829	-25½	1878½	878¼
Tesco	413¼	-3	475½	314½
Unilever	4864	+48	6177½	4631
United Utilities	1192½#	-14	1242	944½
Vodafone Group	104#	+½	104¼	64
Weir Group	3178	-32	3210	1984
Whitbread	2751	-	3274	2335

Amazon culls more jobs as AI spreads

AMAZON is preparing another round of job cuts amid growing use of AI in corporate roles. It follows a round of redundancies just months ago.

The move comes as International Monetary Fund MD Kristalina Georgieva warned AI is set to hit the global labour market like a “tsunami”.

She told the World Economic Forum in Davos, research showed 60% of jobs in advanced economies will be affected by AI in the coming years, alongside 40% globally.

Roles will be “enhanced, eliminated or transformed”.

Amazon, which declined to comment, is reportedly due to unveil a second wave of job cuts next week. October layoffs were initially linked to the rapid rise of AI, though CEO Andy Jassy later insisted they were driven more by company culture and excessive layers of management.

+ BG + Barclays + BT + Centrica + Dixons Carphone + First Group + HSBC + Kingfisher + Marks & Spencer + Next + Prudential + Rolls-Royce + Sainsburys + Tesco + Unilever + Vodafone + Whitbread + WPP

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Aerospace & Defence				
Avon Rubber.....	1944	+8	2180	1338
Babcock International.....	1454	-10	1502	501
BAE Systems.....	2027	+42	2093	1180½
Chemring Group.....	524	+8	593	297½
QinetiQ Group.....	522½	+7	572	361
Rolls-Royce Group.....	1253	+9	1305	582½
Senior.....	250½	+2½	252	115½
Alternative Energy				
Porvair.....	870		900	626
Banks				
Barclays.....	480¼	-5¼	489	241¼
Bco Santander.....	912	-13	925	400½
Close Brothers.....	518	-15½	550½	266½
HSBC Holdings.....	1231	-13¼	1244¼	713¼
Investec.....	601	-3½	610½	414
Lloyds Banking Grp.....	101¾	-¼	102½	61
Metro Bank.....	130	+¼	133½	81
NatWest Group.....	646½	-6¼	665½	411¼
Paragon Group.....	900	+4½	970	686½
Standard Chartered.....	1829	-25½	1878½	878¼
Beverages				
Barr (AG).....	635	-6	711	574
Coca-Cola HBC.....	3890	-18	4034	2762
Diageo.....	1675	-20	2503½	1577
Chemicals				
Carlo.....	57½	-½	80	21
Croda International.....	2764	-41	3383	2465
Elementis.....	167¼	-1½	176¼	115
Johnson Matthey.....	2358½	-16	2388	1156
Synthomer.....	57		158¼	46
Trealt.....	214	-1	444	186½
Victrex.....	739	-1	1048	589
Construction & Materials				
Balfour Beatty.....	708	-11	735	390½
Costain Group.....	162	-3	168	86
CRH.....	9020	-104	9704	6142
Dialight.....	305	+3	364	90¼
Galliford Try.....	534	-7	546	321
Gleeson (MU).....	401	-6	538	320
Keller Group.....	1742	+4	1742	1240
Kier Group.....	223½	+½	231½	115¼
Marshall's.....	162¼	-1¼	293	159½
Morgan Sindall.....	4890	-20	4985	2945
Severfield-Rowen.....	27	-2	52¼	19
Smart (J) & Co.....	132½#		140	110
Electricity				
Drax Group.....	898	+4½	903½	536½
SSE.....	2322½	-6	2363	1463½
Telecom Plus.....	1330	+4	2085	1306
Electronic & Electrical Equipment				
Acal.....	621#		738	486
Halma.....	3638#	-58	3710	2360
Oxford Instruments.....	2505	+5	2510	1500
Renishaw.....	3840	-35	3875	2145
TT Electronics.....	110	+1	154	73
XP Power.....	1202	+86	1314	621
Equity Investment Instruments				
Aberdeen Asian Sml.....	380	-3	384	256
Aberforth Sml.Co.....	1654	+2	1663¼	1212
Acom Income.....				
Albion Tech.& Gen. VCT.....	66		71	65½
Alliance Trust.....	1272	-8	1324	1050
Aurora Inv.Tst.....	276	-3	279	212½
AVI Global Tst.....	264½	-½	266½	202
Baillie Gifford Japan.....	913	-7	951	657
Baillie Gifford Shin Nip.....	137½	-¼	138½	95
Bankers Inv.Tst.....	133#	-½	136	101
Baronsmead VCT2.....	48½		52	46½
BH Macro GBP.....	401½	-2½	409½	371½
Biotech Growth Trust.....	1275	-10	1300	620
BlackRock Mining.....	979	+7	994	406½
Bluehone AIM VCT2.....	28¼		31	28¼
British Assets Tst.....	28	+¼	49¼	26¼
Brunner Inv.Tst.....	1462	-14	1494	1140
Caledonia Inv.....	374	+3½	391½	334½
City Natural Res.Yld.....	421	+6	423¼	165¼
City Of London.....	541#	-3	549	411½
Dunedin Ent.Lt.....				
Dunedin Income.....	309	-1	312	262
Edin Wwide Inv.....	223	-½	229½	143
Edin.Inv.Tst.....	814	-4	839	680
Edin.US Tracker.....	381½#	-1	389	289½
Elderstreet VCT.....	38¼		41	36½
F&C Cap&Inc.....	348½	-1	354	287

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
F&C Inv.Tst.....				
1244#	-11	1272	962	
F&C Smaller Cos.....				
183½#	-1¼	185	136½	
F&C US Smaller Companies.....				
1415	-2½	1515	1115	
Fidelity Asian.....				
616	+2	628	454	
Fidelity European.....				
427	-3	434	338½	
Fidelity Special.....				
430½	-1½	433½	295½	
Finsbury Gwth&In.....				
813	-4	962	795	
Foresight Tech.VCT.....				
65½	-1½	75½	62	
Genesis E.M.F.....				
1166	+2	1178	632	
Graphite Ent.....				
1524	-8	1600	1070	
Hansa Tst 'A'.....				
272		274	190	
Hansa Tst Plc.....				
274		278	192½	
Henderson Far Est.....				
253	-1	255½	190½	
Henderson High Inc.....				
194#	-2½	196½	151	
Herald Inv.Tst.....				
2630	-10	2640	1738	
HGC Capital Tst.....				
502	+1	538	448	
HSBC Infrastructure.....				
117½	+½	125¼	106	
Impax Env.Mkt.....				
428	-1½	431	310½	
Int.Biotech.Tst.....				
980#	-2	998	480	
International Public.....				
128¼	+½	130	107¼	
Invesco Asia.....				
440	-2	447	300	
Invesco Perp UK.....				
388		390	313½	
JPM American.....				
1120	-12	1182	869	
JPM Asian.....				
484½#	-5½	491½	331½	
JPM Claverhouse.....				
878	-2	888	660	
JPM Emerg Mkt.....				
144#	-1½	146	95	
JPM Euro Sml Co.....				
618#	-5	625	444½	
JPM Global Emerging.....				
181½#	-1½	183½	118½	
JPM Indian.....				
957	-14	1106	904	
JPM Japanese.....				
741#	-7	759	493	
JPM Overseas IT.....				
583	+1	610	480	
JPM Smaller Co.....				
339½	+1½	340	253	
JPM US Sml Co.....				
418	-7	514	338	
Jupiter Euro.....				
933	-6	959	757	
JZ Capital Partners.....				
188	+1	220	180¼	
Law Debenture.....				
1122	-2	1132	788	
Lowland Invest Co.....				
167#	+½	168	114½	
Majedie Inv.....				
275	-2	284	230	
Manchester&Lon.....				
782	+2	944	512	
Martin Currie Prtfllo Tst.....				
351#	-1	383	295	
Maven Income And Growth VCT.....				
34½	+1	38	33½	
Mercantile Inv Tst.....				
267#	-½	267½	202½	
Merchants Tst.....				
616		619	474	
Mid Wynd Int.....				
782	-4	836	664	
Monks Inv.Tst.....				
1540	-4	1554	1036	
Montanaro Euro Tst.....				
170	-½	183½	138	
Montanaro UK.....				
105#	+1	106½	87¼	
Murray Inc.Tst.....				
931		938	754	
Murray Int.Tst.....				
331½#		337	239	
New India.....				
712	-18	832	686	
New Star Inv.Tst.....				
129½		131	100	
Northern Venture.....				
56½	58½	55½		
Oxford Tech 2 VCT.....				
6½	7	5½		
Pacific Assets.....				
374	-1	378	302	
Pacific Horizon.....				
867	+3	870	507	
Pantheon Int.....				
389	+1	389½	266	
Pershing Square Hold.....				
4550	-82	5090	3244	
Polar Cap.Tech.....				
491½	-2½	496	255½	
RCM Technology Trust.....				
547	+4	550	307	
RIT Capital Partners.....				
2225	+5	2275	1722	
Ruffer Investment.....				
308	+4	308¼	272½	
Schroder Asia.....				
696#	-6	702	461½	
Schroder Inc.....				
351½#	-½	356	255	
Schroder Japan.....				
328#	-4	334	209	
Schroder UK.....				
210	+1	211	158½	
Schroder UK M&S.....				
748	+6	750	520	
Scottish American.....				
521	-3	525	454½	
Scottish Mortgage.....				
1210	+3	1215½	815¼	
Shires Inc.....				
315½#	-½	320	222	
Small Comp Div.Tst.....				
137	+1	150½	124	
Standard Life Equity.....				
419	+1	421	288½	
Standard Life UK Sml.....				
524	-1	531	426	
Temple Bar.....				
380½	-2	386½	258	
Templeton Emrg.....				
258#	-½	259	151¼	
The European Inv.Tst.....				
110#	-1½	111½	84	
Throgmorton Tst.....				
656		661	469	
TR Euro.Growth.....				
226	+1	226¼	163	
TR Prop. IT.....				
325	-1½	338½	277½	
Witan Pacific.....				
318½	+½	322	222	
Wwide Healthcare.....				
376	-5	397	265½	
Financial Services				
3i Group.....				
3289	+16	4459	2999	
3i Infrastructure.....				
375	+½	385	301	
Abdrn.....				
217	-4½	225¼	123¼	
Ashmore Group.....				
234¼	+3½	238	125	
Guinness Peat Group.....				
86	-1¼	96	68¼	



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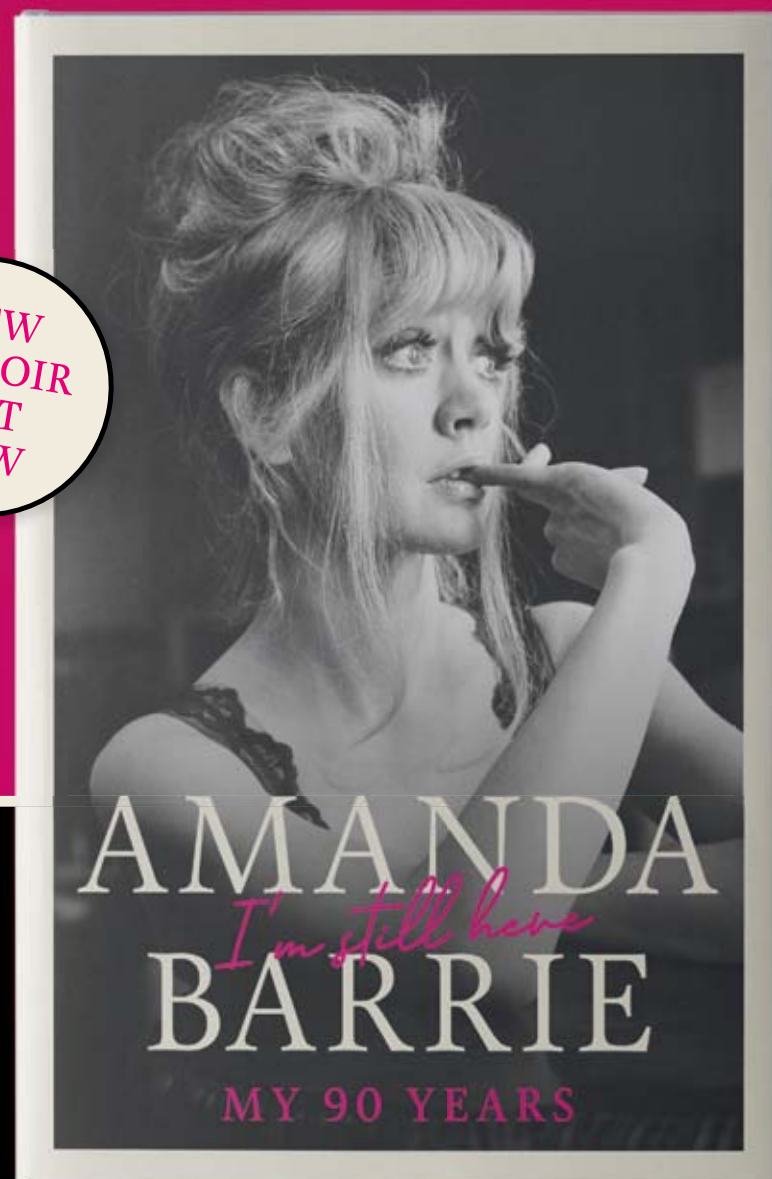
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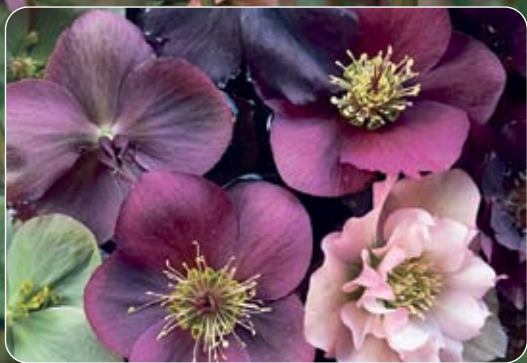
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- ✓ Flowering period: January - May
- ✓ Position: Part sun / part shade / full shade
- ✓ Height / Spread in maturity: 50cm/50cm
- ✓ Temperatures: Fully hardy down to -20°C
- ✓ Good for: Pots, containers, pollinators

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small branches. The telescopic handle and wheel let you trim confidently and comfortably, staying upright with no bending or awkward angles, making precise garden maintenance simple and stress-free.

- ✓ 2-in-1 design: trim lawn edges, hedges and shrubs
- ✓ Includes trimming shears with 2 interchangeable heads
- ✓ Cordless - no trailing wires

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Racing



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THE FAST LANE

Mangan mudlover to get the better of Skelton star

SPILLANE'S TOWER (2.25) can halt the British stranglehold on the Grade Two Betfair Cotswold Chase at Festival Trials Day.

Only one edition of the 3m 1½f contest in the last 20 years has been won by a racehorse trained across the Irish Sea.

But Jimmy Mangan and Jack Kennedy go for the feature with a mudlover who finished runner-up to Gold Cup hero Galopin Des Champs and the best version of his stablemate Fact To File on two of his last three chasing starts.

A couple of runs over hurdles should have put him spot on for this and he is only rated 2lb lower than Grey Dawning, who concedes 6lb.

Owner JP McManus, right, has several other good chances, with **IMPOSE TOI** (3.35) favourite to carry on his winning streak in the Pertemps



Network Cleeve Hurdle. Three from three this term, he has come out on top in his encounters with Strong Leader, who has never been at his best at Prestbury Park.

Impose Toi holds all the aces after collecting Newbury's Long Distance Hurdle and the Long Walk at Ascot on his way here.

Followers of the green and gold hoops will be looking to **JAGWAR** (1.15) for the treble in the Betfair Exchange Handicap Chase.

The Oliver Greenall and Josh Guerriero trainee did well to take third considering how the December Gold Cup played out and he is tipped to go two

places better. But colourmate The New Lion needs to find extra if he is to thwart Nicky Henderson's **SIR GINO** (3.00) in the Grade Two Unibet Hurdle.

Better off with Final Orders from their last meeting, **PLACENET** (1.50) has conditions in his favour in the Glenfarclas Cross Country Handicap Chase.

The distance the French raider was beaten was exaggerated by a bad mistake at the third last, when he was creeping into contention.

Saddled by David Cottin, who has success in this discipline, the nine-year-old gelding was rated 145 in his younger days and Sam Twiston-Davies is a positive jockey booking. At Doncaster, **THE PRICE OF PEACE**

(12.55, Nap) is on the up in the Virgin Bet Daily Extra Places River Don Novices' Hurdle.

Handler Rebecca Curtis says the seven-year-old is still raw but has similarities to her Gold Cup candidate Haiti Couleurs.

Second to Kalkbrenner in a good 2m 4f novice at Curtis' home track Ffos Las, he went away in eye-catching style over three miles at Chepstow.

DEEP CAVE (2.05) is likely to benefit from a strong gallop in the Virgin Bet Great Yorkshire Chase, with Grand Geste, Docpickedme, Josh The Boss and New Order all prominent racers.

The top weight received a couple of form boosts from his Bangor success in November. **FEET OF A DANCER** (1.30) has solid claims in the Grade Two Virgin Bet A Good Bet Yorkshire Rose Mares' Hurdle.



SPILL THE BEANS
Spillane's Tower is fancied to win the Cotswold Chase

12.47 HANDICAP HURDLE
£3,697 (Class 5) 1m 7f 168yds (5 declared)
1 LLLP-32 EL JEFFE (35) (D) T A B Hamilton 9 12-0..... Ben Smith 104
2 1384-62 LEXIE'S MOON (13) (D) L Horsfall 8 11-13..... B Macey ★110
3 90-062 ● KENZOKO (24) (S) O Murphy 6 11-9..... L Saunders(3) 107
4 PSLP-13 LUPUS REGEM (45) (D) H Dickinson 10 11-5..... Murray Dodd 99
5 46-34U0 THE LONGEST DAY (44) Mrs S Leech 10 10-2.....

Miss Roisin Leech(8) 106
BLINKERS: No. 4 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 1, 5 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 4, 5
HOOD: No. 1. SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 1, 2.
SP FORECAST: 5-4 Kenzoko, 2 Lexie's Moon, 4 El Jefe, 12 Lupus Regem, 20 The Longest Day.
2025: My Friend Sean 6-11-0, Cameron Iles(3) 4-5 Fav (T Lacey), 7 ran.

1.22 HAPPY 50TH BIRTHDAY SARA MAIDEN HDL
£5,446 (4) 1m 7f 168yds (14)
1 3/ ALL ONE WORD (1000) D McCain 7 11-8..... W Maggs(5)
2 P-3L7 BARGAIN HUNTER (29) D J Jeffreys 5 11-8..... N Slatter(3)
3 CORSCAN CAPER (F33) K Frost 6 11-8..... Lee Edwards
4 2-43 JET STEEL (54) T Vaughan 5 11-8..... Sean Houllihan
5 0U3-31 JONZAC (69) P Morris 6 11-8..... H Reed
6 KINGDOM OF STARS (F113) Kerry Lee 5 11-8..... T Cannon
7 LANCIER DES OBEAUX (29) L Horsfall 5 11-8..... B Macey(7)
8 TALES OF BRAVERY (36) D Skelton 6 11-8..... C J Todd
9 3-143 TONY JOE (34) T Ellis 6 11-8..... J Andrews(3) 106
10 4-24 ● UP TO TRIX (46) O Murphy 6 11-8..... R T Dunne 103
11 0 YOURCARDISMARKED (44) T Vaughan 5 11-8..... J Hogan
12 2-43 HALFTHEWORLDWAY (29) O Greenall & J Guerriero 5 11-1.....

Craig Nichol 113
13 2230-36 ROSES ALL THE WAY (35) (F) D McCain 7 11-1..... T Gillard ★116
14 SEEKINGRAINBOWS Sarah Hollinshead 8 11-1.....
Tabitha Worsley(3) -
TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 8, 13 HOOD: Nos. 4, 8.
SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 5.
SP FORECAST: 3 Roses All The Way, 7-2 Halfttheworldway, 5 Tales Of Bravery, 6 Up To Trix, 7 Kingdom Of Stars, 10 Jet Steel, 12 Tony Joe, 14 Others.
2025: Roesse 6-11-8, Liam Harrison 2-9 Fav (B Pauling), 8 ran.

TRACK FACTS: GOING: Soft. Left Handed. **TOP TRACK JOCKEY** (2021-26): Stan Sheppard 15% Strike rate. **TOP TRACK TRAINER** (2021-26): O Murphy 22% Strike rate. **FIRST TIME:** 3.41 Jo Coko (cheek pieces), Hillcrest (visor). **BEATEN FAVOURITES:** 3.06 Orderoftheday, 3.41 Jo Coko(hcp ch), Mount Gay Run(hcp hdl). **LONGEST TRAVELLER:** El Jefe (12-47) 256 miles. **STABLE SWITCH:** 122 All One Word from Donnchadh Doyle in Ireland to D McCain, Jonzac from Aidan Fitzgerald in Ireland to P Morris, Kingdom Of Stars from T Ward to Kerry Lee.

DONCASTER: Soft-heavy in places
12.45-RATHKENNY (C O'Farrell, 11-2) 1; West Hill Verde (5-2 2nd fav); 2: Hardly Surprising (11-8 fav) 3. 13 ran. 2¼l, 4¼l. (N Mulholland). Tote: £7.70; pl £2.10, £1.50, £1.20. exacta: £28.30. trifecta: £75.60. CSF: £20.86. Non-runners: Kiwi Rush, Passing Diamond.
1.15-WESTERN KNIGHT (B J Powell, 5-2 2nd fav) 1; Kap Quest (17-2) 2; One Big Bang (evens fav) 3. 4 ran. 2¼l, 3l. (J Tizzard). Tote: £3.50; exacta: £17.50. trifecta: £29.90. CSF: £17.44. Non-runners: Elysian Knight, Roadlesstravelled.
1.45-MINSTREL KNIGHT (B Hughes, 7-2) 1; Division Day (40-1) 2; Minella Jury (13-8 jf fav) 3. 8 ran. 5l, nk. (E Bethell; 13-8 jf fav Legal Weapon). Tote: £5.40; pl £1.50, £1.10, £1.10. exacta: £110.40. trifecta: £425.10. CSF: £91.68. Non-runners: Desertmore News, Final Escape, Irondando Has, Lasko Des Obeaux, Prince Of Clova.
2.15-GUARD DUTY (B R Jones, 8-15 fav) 1; Fingal's Hill (10-1) 2; Ginger Mail (12-1) 3. H'cap 4 ran. 2l, 8l. (E Lavelle). Tote: £15.4; exacta: £4.60. trifecta: £11.60. CSF: £5.91. Non-runners: Bommore, Dargianini, Geromino, Smokeringinethdark.
2.50-JAMACINE (Harry Atkins, 5-6 fav) 1; Vanilla Dancer (11-1) 2; Joto (7-2 2nd fav) 3. H'cap 11 ran, nk, 8l. (N Mulholland). Tote: £1.84; pl £1.10, £2.60, £1.40. exacta: £11.40. tricast: £27.23. trific-

1.57 HANDICAP CHASE
£6,760 (3) 1m 7f 214yds (5)
1 L/53413- XCITATIONS (322) (D) Mrs P Sly 11 11-6..... J Andrews(3) 136
2 1312-42 ● SUNNYVILLA (35) (D) N Richards 11 11-5..... C Bewley 137
3 U122-57 CABHFULFUNG (35) (D) Kerry Lee 10 11-4..... T Cannon ★142
4 1P2-1PL ADMIRAL STEWAR (23) J Snowden 7 11-3..... J A Anderson(3) 79
5 71131 JAIPALETEMS (7) (D) D Pipe 7 11-2..... R Corcoran(7) 135

TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 3, 4, 5. SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 3, 4, 5, 2, 1.
SP FORECAST: 6-5 Jaipaletemps, 9-4 Sunnyvilla, 7 Cabhfulfungi, 8 Xcitations, Admiral Stewart.
2025: No corresponding race.

2.32 AP SUMMIT SADDLER HANDICAP CHASE
£5,281 (4) 2m 4f (8)
1 1LPP-P2 KARUMA GREY (16) D Hamer 8 12-0..... L Williams 119
2 F50-P16 KAMAXOS (28) C Longsdon 9 12-0..... Lilly Pinchin 116
3 F25L-L4 KAMAXOS (28) C Longsdon 9 12-0..... Lilly Pinchin 116
4 211F-35 MASTER BREFFNI (35) M Hammond 8 11-13..... C Bewley 120
5 P1-PFLP QUICK SHARPENER (41) (D) Dr R Newland & J Insole 9 11-2..... C Hammond 118
6 5L33-24 ● MY NOBLE LORD (35) O Greenall & J Guerriero 5 11-9.....

Craig Nichol 108
7 L/P432-L CLONAKILTY (73) (D) Lizzie Quinlan 9 11-8..... Sean Quinlan ★121
8 56223-6 CAHIER'S DEN (75) D McCain 6 11-2..... T Gillard -
TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 3, 5, 6, 7 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 1, 3, 6, 7
HOOD: Nos. 2, 4, SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 3, 7, 2, 1, 4, 5.
SP FORECAST: 11-4 KamaXos, 4 My Noble Lord, 5 Cahier's Den, 7 Master Breffni, 8 Quick Sharpener, Karuma Grey, 10 Clonakilty, Abbeydale.
2025: Immortal Fame 9-11-6, Cameron Iles(7) 7-2 (Deborah Cole), 9 ran.

3.06 4 OAKS GROUP HANDICAP HURDLE
£4,527 (4) 2m 3f 207yds (8)
1 3/122-13 ORDEROFTHE DAY (27) O Murphy 6 12-0..... L Saunders(5) 109
2 2-436 LOCQUIREC (22) O Greenall & J Guerriero 5 11-1..... Craig Nichol 103
3 FP-3543 ● WARRIORS DESTINY (44) F O'Brien 6 11-10..... J Hogan 110
4 1113-531 IN THE AGE (23) D Skelton 6 11-8..... Harry Atkins(7) 118
5 11BLP-L GALASSIAN (24) (D) Mrs M Rowley 9 11-5..... S Sheppard 80
6 53L12-3 GEGE VILLE (35) D N Richards 10 11-6..... C Bewley 117
7 4F-42L1 CODETALKER (34) S Edmunds 6 11-4..... C Hammond 116
8 70367P LUCKY ONE (21) Mrs S Leech 11 11-2..... Conor Rabbitt(3) ★121

TONGUE STRAP: No. 2. SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 7, 5, 6, 8, 1.
SP FORECAST: 11-4 In The Age, 3 CodeTalker, 4 Orderoftheday, 7 Warriors Destiny, 8 Locquirec, Gege Ville, 16 Galassian, 20 Lucky One.
2025: Jilajone 6-11-13, Fergus Gallard 10-3 (D Pipe), 9 ran.

3.47-HOUSE OF HABSURG (J Tudor, 85-40 fav) 1; He Knows Better (11-4 2nd fav) 2; Kalista Love (4-1) 3. H'cap 8 ran, 3l, 6¼l. (Christian Williams). Tote: £13.1; pl £1.20, £1.30, £1.40. exacta: £7.90. tricast: £21.27. trifecta: £22.40. CSF: £8.92.

3.47-HOUSE OF HABSURG (J Tudor, 85-40 fav) 1; He Knows Better (11-4 2nd fav) 2; Kalista Love (4-1) 3. H'cap 8 ran, 3l, 6¼l. (Christian Williams). Tote: £13.1; pl £1.20, £1.30, £1.40. exacta: £7.90. tricast: £21.27. trifecta: £22.40. CSF: £8.92.

3.47-HOUSE OF HABSURG (J Tudor, 85-40 fav) 1; He Knows Better (11-4 2nd fav) 2; Kalista Love (4-1) 3. H'cap 8 ran, 3l, 6¼l. (Christian Williams). Tote: £13.1; pl £1.20, £1.30, £1.40. exacta: £7.90. tricast: £21.27. trifecta: £22.40. CSF: £8.92.

3.47-HOUSE OF HABSURG (J Tudor, 85-40 fav) 1; He Knows Better (11-4 2nd fav) 2; Kalista Love (4-1) 3. H'cap 8 ran, 3l, 6¼l. (Christian Williams). Tote: £13.1; pl £1.20, £1.30, £1.40. exacta: £7.90. tricast: £21.27. trifecta: £22.40. CSF: £8.92.

UTTOXETER SKY
THE SCOUT
12.47 Kenzoko 3.06 Warriors Destiny
1.22 Up To Trix 3.41 Mount Gay Run
1.57 Sunnyvilla 4.18 WalkinthePresent
2.32 My Noble Lord

3.41 NOVICES' HANDICAP CHASE
£5,281 (4) 3m 2f 13yds (9)
1 4PUL-3P HILLCREST (42) H Daly 11 12-2..... S Sheppard 114
2 1/313-P4 PIERROT JAGUEN (28) O Murphy 7 12-1..... R T Dunne 119
3 L56-813 ABOUTDAMNTIME (28) O Greenall & J Guerriero 7 11-1.....

Craig Nichol 119
4 P36-3L5 MADAKET (36) P Hobbs & J White 8 11-7..... Sean Houllihan ★125
5 5126-24 DOUBLE CLICK (58) J Snowden 8 11-7..... Isabelle Ryder(5) -
6 5/34U-24 ● MOUNT GAY RUN (35) D Skelton 8 11-7..... C J Todd -
7 113-431 PAPER MILL (58) (C&D) S Edmunds 10 11-7..... C Hammond 122
8 1/234-L JO COKO (44) N Richards 7 11-4..... Sean Quinlan 118
9 334-4F4 KADJAR DES MOTTES (33) D McCain 6 11-0..... T Gillard 115
VISOR: No. 1 TONGUE STRAP: No. 3 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8.
SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 3, 5, 1, 8, 4, 7, 2.
SP FORECAST: 11-4 Paper Mill, 5 Aboutdamntime, 6 Pierrot Jaguen, Jo Coko, 7 Mount Gay Run, Double Click, 12 Madaket, Hillcrest, 14 Kadjar Des Mottes.
2025: Good Work 9-11-2, William Shanahan(5) 7-1 (O Greenall & J Guerriero), 6 ran.

4.18 QUINNBT HANDICAP HURDLE
£3,697 (5) 2m 3f 207yds (7)
1 35-9444 ETON MES (15) D Pipe 5 12-0..... R Corcoran(7) 95
2 7L14-LL TARBUCK (27) (C&D) C Dyson 8 11-13..... J Quinlan ★103
3 243P-68 TECH THAT (26) R Phillips 7 11-10..... H Bannister 72
4 L-680 THORGATH (38) T Lacey 5 11-6..... S Sheppard 90
5 43/51L-8 RICHARDSON (45) (C&D) B Clarke 11 10-10..... Lee Edwards 102
6 73-068 ● WALKINTHEPRESENT (46) N Mulholland 6 10-11..... R T Dunne 74
7 2L-1665 ROCK ON TOMMY (36) (C&D) O Murphy 11 10-6..... L Stones(3) 101

BLINKERS: No. 7 TONGUE STRAP: No. 7. SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 5, 7, 2.
SP FORECAST: 2 Eton Mes, 7-2 Rock On Tommy, 4 Thorgath, 5 WalkinthePresent, 8 Richardson, 14 Tech That, 20 Tarbuck.
2025: Owl Of Athens 6-10-3, Conor Ring 85-40 Fav (E Williams), 11 ran.

4.18-GOLDEN SON (Miss Olive Nicholls, 4-1 jt 2nd fav) 1; Paul Marvel (15-2) 2; Franco De Port (18-1) 3. 8 ran. 6l, 2¼l. (P Nicholls; evens fav Jet Plane). Tote: £5.10; pl £1.70, £2.00, £1.80. exacta: £31.70. trifecta: £92.60. CSF: £34.24. Non-runners: Good Boy Bobby, Time Leader.
Jackpot: £2,331.00
Placepot: £20.60
(Race 1) 3, 4; (2) 2, 1, 6; (3) 1, 5; (4) 8, 3, 4; (5) 9, 3, 10; (6) 7, 3, 5; Quadpot: £9.50

WOLVERHAMPTON: Standard
12.57-MR NUGGET (S M Levey, 11-4 fav) 1; Dingwall (6-1) 2; Magic Runner (13-2) 3. H'cap 9 ran. shd, ¼l. (D M Simcock). Tote: £3.75; pl £1.30, £2.50, £1.50. exacta: £16.00. tricast: £97.23. trifecta: £109.20. CSF: £19.61.
1.27-EUPATOR (S M Levey, 6-5 fav) 1; Fools Rush In (5-1) 2; Study Up (10-1) 3. H'cap 7 ran. 5l, nk. (R Hannon). Tote: £2.20; pl £1.30, £1.80. exacta: £7.00. tricast: £39.66. trifecta: £40.70. CSF: £7.65. Non-runners: R P Mcmurry.
1.57-OBJECTOR (D Keenan, 1-8 fav) 1; Al Bowly (25-1) 2; Hunterian (18-1) 3. 4 ran. 11l, nk. (G Scott). Tote: £1.13; exacta: £5.80. trifecta: £11.80. CSF: £5.09.

2.27-FAIR Y ISLE (S D Bowen, 7-2 2nd fav) 1; Loquella (8-11 fav) 2; Preferred (17-2) 3. 6 ran. 1¼l, ¼l. (H Evans). Tote: £4.50; pl £1.50, £1.10. exacta: £9.30. trifecta: £22.60. CSF: £6.55.
3.02-MIDNIGHT CALL (Jack Doughty, 5-2 jt 2nd fav) 1; Mintana (12-1) 2; Piperstown (5-4 fav) 3. 9 ran. ¼l, 1¼l. (A Carroll). Tote: £3.50; pl £1.20, £2.30, £1.10. exacta: £27.10. trifecta: £78.10. CSF: £32.86. Non-runners: The Cutest.
3.37-BEAUZON (C Bishop, 5-2 fav) 1; She Went Whoosh (28-1) 2; Bossy Parker (10-3) 3. 9 ran. ¼l, ¼l. (I Williams). Tote: £3.50; pl £1.10, £5.80, £1.70. exacta: £60.30. trifecta: £266.80. CSF: £75.95. Non-runners: Autumn Angel.
4.10-EL BUFALO (B Loughane, 7-2 2nd fav) 1; Lazzar (5-4 fav) 2; Street Life (15-2) 3. H'cap 7 ran. ¼l, ¼l. (T Faulkner). Tote: £4.50; pl £1.90, £1.20. exacta: £8.00. trifecta: £30.60. CSF: £8.50.
4.40-CARDINAL POINT (H Crouch, 7-4 fav) 1; Hackney Diamonds (3-1 2nd fav) 2; Word Of Mouth (15-2) 3. H'cap 6 ran. 4¼l, 2¼l. (M Bell). Tote: £2.75; pl £1.30, £1.90. exacta: £5.70. trifecta: £30.40. CSF: £7.15.
Placepot: £4.90
(Race 1) 3, 5, 8; (2) 3, 7; (3) 1; (4) 3, 1; (5) 2, 3, 1; (6) 1, 8, 3; Quadpot: £2.10

1.57-OBJECTOR (D Keenan, 1-8 fav) 1; Al Bowly (25-1) 2; Hunterian (18-1) 3. 4 ran. 11l, nk. (G Scott). Tote: £1.13; exacta: £5.80. trifecta: £11.80. CSF: £5.09.

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Grey Dawning doubt

GREY DAWNING will miss the Cotswold Chase if the ground at Cheltenham today is “really heavy”, his trainer Dan Skelton cautioned yesterday.

The nine-year-old grey, a 14-1 chance with William Hill for the Boodles Cheltenham Gold Cup on March 13, is a hot favourite for this afternoon's Grade Two trial.

But the going at Cheltenham was changed to 'good to soft, heavy in places' yesterday – further rain is forecast for today – and Skelton, above, speaking at Warwick, warned: “I'm not anticipating there being a problem but I will not be

By David Yates

drawn into running if it's really heavy.

“We are prioritising the Gold Cup this year – that is absolutely No 1.

“We didn't do that last year but we are doing it this year, so hopefully the ground is just soft and we can go and give it our best shot.”

It is nine weeks since Grey Dawning, ridden by Skelton's brother Harry, made

a winning return to action in the Betfair Chase at Haydock Park and the trainer added: “He's in good physical condition to run as well as he can but I

do think there is just a little bit more to come.”

Nicky Henderson's Feel Gut is a general 12-1 chance for Cheltenham's Triumph Hurdle after making a successful British debut in Warwick's Hazelton Mountford Insurance Brokers EBF Junior “National Hunt” Hurdle.

“We were a bit nervous because he doesn't run around every morning saying, ‘Look at me!’” said Henderson. “But that was nice to watch.”

■ NAAS must pass a 7.30am race day inspection tomorrow, while waterlogging caused the cancellation of fixtures at Fairyhouse today and Fontwell Park tomorrow.



GROUND ISSUES:
Grey Dawning will not run if the going is very heavy

THE SCOUT			
12.05 Barlovento	2.25 Spillane's Tower		
12.40 MAESTRO CONTI (nb)	3.00 Sir Gino		
1.15 Jagwar	3.35 Impose Toi		
1.50 PLACENET	4.10 Taurus Bay		

JACKPOT: www.totepooliveinfo.com

12.05 TIMEFORM NOVICES' HINDICAP CHASE (9 dec)			
1 668-122	PUSH THE BUTTON (36) M Walford 7 12-0	J Hamilton	140
2 1216-23	CALIFET EN VOL (23) N Henderson 7 12-0	N De Boinville	134
3 2321-2L	QUEBECOIS (50) P Nicholls 7 11-12	F Gingell	131
4 212-1F1	JORDANS CROSS (42) A Honeyball 6 11-11	S Twiston-Davies	138
5 152-F12	KDEUX SAINT FRAY (49) C A Honeyball 6 11-5	G Sheehan	141
6 1/122-21	BARLOVENTO (29) D O Murphy 7 11-2	S Bowen	139
7 354-134	SECRET DES DIEUX (29) James Owen 6 11-0	B J Powell	140
8 11-8F21	SCORSESE (29) N Mulholland 8 10-11	C O'Farrell	142
9 3154L1	KALINE DES BOULLAT (24) M Seror 6 10-5	Bryony Frost	-

TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 3, 4, 5 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 8, 9, 1, 3.
SP FORECAST: 7-2 Jordans Cross, 4 Califet En Vol, Barlovento, 9-2 Kdeux Saint Fray, 11-2 Push The Button, 14 Secret Des Dieux, 16 Others.
2025: Jagwar 6-11-3, Jonjo O'Neill Jr 4-1 (O Greenall & J Guerriero), 7 ran.

12.40 JCB TRIUMPH TRIAL JUVENILE HDL (G2) 4YO			
1 11113	ONE HORSE TOWN (42) C Harry Derham 11-5	Paul O'Brien	133
2 1216-23	MAESTRO CONTI (28) D O Skelton 11-3	H Skelton	135
3 6F	CHARTWELL JOCK (41) Seamus Mullins 11-0	D Sansom	88
4 P41	HARDY STUFF (28) G Elliott (IRE) 11-0	J W Kennedy	122
5 2	LORD BYRON (37) Faye Bramley 11-0	B R Jones	120
6 11	MINELLA YOGA (26) D P Nicholls 11-0	S Twiston-Davies	124
7 1P	SONIC PIONEER (28) M Keighley 11-0	S Bowen	129
8 411	TENTER LE TOUT (28) D Chester Williams 10-12	G Sheehan	134
9 1412F	MISS DES BOULLATS (24) M Seror 10-10	Bryony Frost	132
10 11	LA LUNA ARTISTA (65) Mrs J Williams 10-7	C Gethings	115

HOOD: No. 4. SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 2, 9, 1.
SP FORECAST: 11-8 Maestri Conti, 9-4 Minella Yoga, 7 One Horse Town, 8 Tenter Le Tout, 12 Hardy Stuff, 25 Others.
2025: East India Dock 11-5, Sam Twiston-Davies 1-2 Fav (James Owen), 10 ran.

1.15 BETFAIR EXCHANGE HINDICAP CHASE (11)			
1 245-4LL	BOOMBAWN (14) 9 12 0	H Skelton	155
Runs: 28	Wins: 7(S,G,S)	Places: 7	E212,425
Trainer: D Skelton	Owner: Bullen-Smith & Faulks		
2 1131-3	JAGWAR (42) (C&D) 7 11 11	Jonjo O'Neill Jr	154
Runs: 12	Wins: 5(S,G,S)	Places: 3	E155,890
Trainer: O Greenall & J Guerriero	Owner: Mr John P McManus		
3 17-4196	RISKINTHEGROUND (23) (C&D) 9 11 4	L Harrison	152
Runs: 32	Wins: 8(S,G,S,G)	Places: 3	E149,812
Trainer: D Skelton	Owner: 3 Sons		
4 13231-1	BOOSTER BOB (56) 8 11 3	S Bowen	153
Runs: 13	Wins: 7(S,G,S)	Places: 1	E142,222
Trainer: O Murphy	Owner: Mrs Diana L Whately		
5 3159-1F	UNCLE BERT (28) 9 11 0	S Twiston-Davies	155
Runs: 24	Wins: 6(S)	Places: 4	E104,289
Trainer: N & W Twiston-Davies	Owner: James & Jean Potter Ltd		
6 13P-331	PRAIRIE WOLF (29) (D) 9 10 11	G Sheehan	155
Runs: 32	Wins: 8(S,G,S,G)	Places: 9	E108,005
Trainer: J Parkinson & S Smith	Owner: Mr G R Orchard & Mrs J M Gray		
7 411-322	DONNACHA (28) 8 10 8	J M Davies	156
Runs: 18	Wins: 5(S,G,S)	Places: 9	E60,767
Trainer: N Hawke	Owner: Mrs Marilyn Jane Martin		
8 724-131	TRIPLE TRADE (21) (C) 10 10 7	B J Powell	154
Runs: 31	Wins: 7(S,G,S,G)	Places: 7	E171,309
Trainer: J Tizzard	Owner: Sjs Racing		
9 77L005	MOON D'ORANGE (23) (C&D) 8 10 6	A Harvey(3)	158
Runs: 23	Wins: 3(S,G,S,G)	Places: 4	E97,707
Trainer: J McConnell (IRE)	Owner: Ian Stuart Griffiths and Gary Evans		
10 L1-P12L	HURRICANE BAY (42) (D) 10 10 5	Bryony Frost	154
Runs: 19	Wins: 4(G)	Places: 6	E46,011
Trainer: L Wadham	Owner: The Hanseatic League		
11 1125-42	JAVERT ALLEN (56) 7 10 4	C Gethings	157
Runs: 10	Wins: 3(S,G,S)	Places: 5	E50,213
Trainer: Mrs J Williams	Owner: Holtmacnabrobinsonmiltonlutterweeden		

TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 2, 3, 10 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 6, 9, 10.
SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 4, 7, 2, 11, 9, 6, 3, 8, 5.
SP FORECAST: 7-4 Jagwar, 4 Booster Bob, 8 Javert Allen, 10 Uncle Bert, Triple Trade, Moon D'orange, 14 Prairie Wolf, 16 Riskintheground, Donnacha, Boombawn, 33 Hurricane Bay.
2025: Moon D'orange 7-10-5, Sean Bowen 7-2 JtFav (J McConnell), 11 ran.
GUIDE: JAGWAR won the novice handicap on this card (2m5f, stf) 12 months ago before returning to score over the same C&D in the Plate (gd-stf) at the Festival, despite his jumping not being particularly fluent in the latter stages. Similar could be said for his return when third in the December Gold Cup (2m5f, gd-stf), but the seven-year-old has the capabilities to prove better than he already is, and this wouldn't be the strongest Cheltenham handicap on paper. **Booster Bob** won on his first start of the season at Newbury (2m6f, stf) but the concern would be whether an undulating track might catch him out. With that in mind, the third from that contest **Prairie Wolf** may reverse the form.

1.50 CROSS COUNTRY HINDICAP CHASE			
1 IL-05F1	FAVORI DE CHAMPDOU (28) 11 12 0	J W Kennedy	147
Runs: 27	Wins: 8(S,G)	Places: 8	E206,747
Trainer: G Elliott (IRE)	Owner: Gigginstown House Stud		
2 P-3P631	FINAL ORDERS (43) (C&D) 10 11 12	K M Donoghue	148
Runs: 49	Wins: 9(S,G)	Places: 8	E161,639
Trainer: G Cromwell (IRE)	Owner: C M D Syndicate		
3 3020-7	LATENIGHTPASS (43) (C&D) 13 11 4	Miss G Andrews	152
Runs: 36	Wins: 13(S,G,S,G)	Places: 8	E97,168
Trainer: T Ellis	Owner: Mrs P A Ellis		
4 4172/05	ANNUAL INVICTUS (26) (C) 11 11 2	F Gordon	134
Runs: 29	Wins: 9(S,G)	Places: 6	E181,003
Trainer: G Gordon	Owner: Mr Thomas Michael Smith		
5 222-LL	HOMME PUBLIC (28) (C) 9 10 13	T Wynne	159
Runs: 33	Wins: 8(S,G,S,G)	Places: 9	E155,942
Trainer: O Greenall & J Guerriero	Owner: The Neviers Racing Partnership li		
6 USP-203	ICEO MADRIK (43) 8 10 9	L Brechet	150
Runs: 33	Wins: 5(S)	Places: 7	E226,774
Trainer: D Cottin (FR)	Owner: Prof Caroline Tisdall		
7 227LL6	TOMMIE BEAU (56) (D) 11 10 7	Paul O'Brien	142
Runs: 50	Wins: 14(S,G,S,G)	Places: 9	E197,884
Trainer: Seamus Mullins	Owner: Simon & Christine Prout		
8 L4-5624	PLACENET (43) 9 10 6	S Twiston-Davies	146
Runs: 29	Wins: 8(S)	Places: 6	E258,636
Trainer: D Cottin (FR)	Owner: Prof C Tisdall & G Thompson		
9 14F17-2	J'ARRIVE DE L'EST (43) 7 10 5	D Meyler	150
Runs: 18	Wins: 5(S)	Places: 3	E133,363
Trainer: E Mullins (IRE)	Owner: Mr P Byrne		
10 PLFP-PL	WHERE IT ALL BEGAN (28) 10 10 4	S Bowen	97
Runs: 24	Wins: 2(S)	Places: 7	E82,525
Trainer: G Elliott (IRE)	Owner: Patrick & Scott Bryceland.mcnelli		
11 4480-PP	ESCARIA TEN (71) 12 10 4	J Best	143
Runs: 27	Wins: 4(S)	Places: 5	E61,939
Trainer: M Keighley	Owner: J B Property Investments (midlands) Ltd		
12 UPL-555	UNANSWERED PRAYERS (43) (C) 10 10 3	C Deutsch	153
Runs: 35	Wins: 5(S,G,S,G)	Places: 6	E84,402
Trainer: C Gordon	Owner: The Morestead Pres Partnership		
13 P5-3L51	SOME SCOPE (26) 8 10 2	G Sheehan	151
Runs: 21	Wins: 6(G,S,G)	Places: 2	E97,050
Trainer: R Hobson	Owner: Mark Scott & And Nigel Horler		
14 L5-606	PEACHES AND CREAM (43) 11 10 2	A Harvey(3)	143
Runs: 46	Wins: 5(G)	Places: 5	E89,333
Trainer: G Cromwell (IRE)	Owner: Gavin Cromwell Racing Ltd		
15 L41-233	MIRALAGO (27) 8 10 2	F Lambert(3)	146
Runs: 25	Wins: 3(S)	Places: 8	E146,212
Trainer: R Nicholls	Owner: Ms Georgina Nicholls		
16 P23-LPO	THE BIG BREAKAWAY (43) (C) 11 10 2	P Hamlin(5)	147
Runs: 31	Wins: 4(S,G)	Places: 6	E147,341
Trainer: S Hosie	Owner: Three Oaks, A Rose And An Acorn		

BLINKERS: No. 1 VISOR: Nos. 11, 16 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 3, 1, 2, 4, 15, 16 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 5, 9, 10.
SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 4, 11, 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 3, 15, 8, 16, 7, 12, 10.
SP FORECAST: 7-4 J'arrive De L'est, 2 Final Orders, 7 Icoo Madrik, 8 Placenet, 10 FAVORI DE CHAMPDOU, 12 Unanswered Prayers, 16 Tommie Beau, 20 Others.
2025: No corresponding race.
GUIDE: Final Orders caused a minor surprise when proving his stamina in no uncertain terms over C&D (gd) in December but a 9lb rise might leave him vulnerable to the runner-up from that contest J'ARRIVE DE L'EST. The seven-year-old was making his first appearance for Emmet Mullins on that occasion and the experience gained, along with a 6lb pull at the weights, gives him an obvious chance of going one better. **Favori De Champdou** fell in the aforementioned contest before winning the Paddy Power at Leopardstown (3m, yld) and is respected.

2.25 COTSWOLD CHASE (GRADE 2)			
1 3/2P12-1	GREY DAWNING (63) (C) 9 11 10	H Skelton	172
Runs: 18	Wins: 10(S,G,S)	Places: 4	E501,566
Trainer: D Skelton	Owner: Mr Robert Kirkland		
2 24/31P-2	L'HOMME PRESSE (43) (C&D) 11 11 10	C Deutsch	168
Runs: 19	Wins: 9(S,G,S,G)	Places: 3	E546,821
Trainer: V Williams	Owner: Dfa Racing (pink,edwards & Sharman)		
3 3325/51	FLOORING PORTER (486) (C&D) 11 11 4	K M Donoghue	-
Runs: 25	Wins: 9(S,G,S,G)	Places: 7	E786,199
Trainer: G Cromwell (IRE)	Owner: Flooring Porter Syndicate		
4 125-293	SPILLANE'S TOWER (24) (D) 8 11 4	J W Kennedy	163
Runs: 17	Wins: 5(S)	Places: 4	E254,735
Trainer: J J Mangnan (IRE)	Owner: Mr John P McManus		

TONGUE STRAP: No. 3. SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 3, 1, 2, 4.
SP FORECAST: 4-7 Grey Dawning, 4 L'Homme Presse, 9-2 Spillane's Tower, 14 Flooring Porter.
2025: L'Homme Presse 10-11-4, Charlie Deutsch 4-5 Fav (V Williams), 6 ran.
GUIDE: Cases can be made for all of these, but marginal preference is for **GREY DAWNING**. Dan Skelton's gelding won the Betfair Chase at Haydock (3m2f, gd-stf) earlier in the season and has been kept fresh since. On that evidence, he could be hard to beat there. That said, **L'Homme Presse** was not disgraced on his return off a mark of 162 in a handicap here (3m2f, gd-stf) last month and he is entitled to be sharper now. **Spillane's Tower** has not been at his very best for a while now but should not be written off, while **Flooring Porter** is more than capable of having a say.

CHELTENHAM RTV			
3.00 UNIBET HURDLE (GRADE 2)			
1 111P-L4	NEMEAN LION (8) 9 11 10	C O'Farrell	156
Runs: 17	Wins: 7(S,G,S)	Places: 4	E290,993
Trainer: Kerry Lee	Owner: Mr Will Roseff		
2 111/11-1	SIR GINO (29) (C&D,F) 6 11 10	N De Boinville	167
Runs: 7	Wins: 7(S,G,S,G)	Places: 7	E337,059
Trainer: N Henderson	Owner: Mrs J Donnelly		
3 1/1111-F	THE NEW LION (56) (C) 7 11 7	H Skelton	165
Runs: 6	Wins: 5(S,G,S)	Places: 7	E155,896
Trainer: D Skelton	Owner: Mr John P McManus		
4 84L631	BRENTFORD HOPE (7) (D) 9 11 4	Paul O'Brien	146
Runs: 22	Wins: 6(S,G,S)	Places: 8	E138,049
Trainer: Harry Derham	Owner: The Optimists Syndicate		

TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 1, 4 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 4, 1, 2, 3.
SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 4, 1, 2, 3.
SP FORECAST: 2-5 Sir Gino, 2 The New Lion, 33 Nemean Lion, 66 Brentford Hope, 2025: Constitution Hill 8-11-10, Nico De Boinville 1-12 Fav (N Henderson), 5 ran.
GUIDE: It is hard to oppose **SIR GINO** after his impressive victory in the Christmas Hurdle at Kempton (2m, gd) a month ago. Given that was his first start in a year, the six-year-old is likely to improve for that outing and could prove to be too good for **The New Lion**. Dan Skelton's gelding was still in charge when falling two out in the Fighting Fifth (2m1f, gd-stf) in November. With a clear round this time, he could give the selection something to think about. **Nemean Lion** can get the better of **Brentford Hope** in the race for third.

3.35 CLEEVE HURDLE (GRADE 2)			
1 IL-0374	GOWEL ROAD (23) (C&D) 10 11 8	S Twiston-Davies	154
Runs: 27	Wins: 5(S,G,S,G)	Places: 8	E173,458
Trainer: N & W Twiston-Davies	Owner: Options O Syndicate		
2 24-2111	IMPOSE TOI (35) (C,D,F) 8 11 8	N De Boinville	163
Runs: 16	Wins: 9(S,G,S,G)	Places: 7	E263,729
Trainer: N Henderson	Owner: Mr John P McManus		
3 L42-122	STRONG LEADER (35) (D) 9 11 8	S Bowen	162
Runs: 19	Wins: 7(S,G,S,G)	Places: 6	E387,833
Trainer: O Murphy	Owner: Welfordgolf Syndicate		
4 21-2345	DODDIETHEGREAT (35) (C&D) 10 11 6	F Gordon	156
Runs: 17	Wins: 5(S,G,S)	Places: 4	E132,396
Trainer: N Henderson	Owner: Mr K Alexander		
5 820-2L5	KAMSIINAS (23) 9 11 2	L Harrison	153
Runs: 19	Wins: 6(G,S,G)	Places: 3	E90,376
Trainer: O'Brien	Owner: Noel Fehilly Racing Syndicates Kamsinas		
6 137-101	MA SHANTOU (23) (C&D) 11 11 2	B R Jones	153
Runs: 11	Wins: 5(S,G,S,G)	Places: 2	E59,824
Trainer: E Lavelle	Owner: Mighty Acorn Stables		

TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 4, 5 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4.
SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 1, 2, 6, 3.
SP FORECAST: 10-11 Impose Toi, 4 Strong Leader, 11-2 Ma Shantou, 6 Doddiethegreat, 12 Gowel Road, 25 Kamsinas.
2025: Gowel Road 9-11-2, Sam Twiston-Davies 5-2 JtFav (N & W Twiston-Davies), 6 ran.
GUIDE: IMPOSE TOI has relished the step up in trip this season and appears to be taking his racing better as he gets older. His spring form last was particularly strong, which included him finishing second in the Coral Cup (2m5f, gd-stf), and the eight-year-old has gone through the ranks from a very useful handicapper, as shown when winning a Pertemps Qualifier at Aintree (3m1f, gd-stf), to winning at the highest level in the Long Walk at Ascot (3m, gd-stf) just before Christmas. He got the better of **Strong Leader** on that occasion and can confirm that form. **Ma Shantou** and **Doddiethegreat** head the remainder.

4.10 AIS NOVICES' HURDLE (GRADE 2)					
£45,560 (1)		2m 4f 56yds		(8)	
1	341-12	ACT OF INNOCENCE (26) N Henderson 6 11-5		N De Boinville	137
2	111	ADONEADEAL (40) O Murphy 6 11-5		G Sheehan	125
3	2-131	FORTUNE TIMMY (29) C Gordon 6 11-5		F Gordon	135
4	2122-12	HEADS UP (71) J McConnell (IRE) 6 11-5		D Mullins	★140
5	421-211	KRIPTICJIM (38) J Tizzard 6 11-5		B J Powell	133
6	421	OPEN SECRET (46) G Elliott (IRE) 5 11-5		J W Kennedy	127
7	1-11	● TAURUS BAY (49) B Pauling 5 11-5		B R Jones	137
8	2/241-12	THE BLUE ROOM (50) O Murphy 6 11-5		S Bowen	139
TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 5, 6 GOOD; No. 2.					
SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 1, 2, 4, 7.					

DONCASTER SSR

12.20	£25,628 (Class 1) 2m 128yds (6 declared)
1 11	● HIGHLAND CRYSTAL (57) 6 Elliott (IRE) 11-5
2 1-	MANLAGA (315) N Henderson 11-5..... J C Gainford ★127
3 5132	LAYSOF (26) J Parkinson & S Smith 11-0..... D McMenamin 115
4 111	MANGANESE (39) M Conley 11-0..... D Bass 103
5 L	SOVEREIGN APPLAUSE (F21) R Menzies 11-0..... N Moscrop 57
6 32	TRALEE GIRL (57) D Skelton 11-0..... T Durrell 124
TONGUE STRAP: No. 5.	
SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 1, 4, 2.	
SP FORECAST: 6-4 Highland Crystal, 13-8 Manlaga, 5 Tralee Girl, Manganese, 100 Laysoft, 200 Sovereign Applause.	
2025: Belfrinn 11-0, Jack Tudor 5-4 Fav (D Pipe), 6 ran.	

12.55 RIVER DON NOVICES' HDL (GRADE 2)

£45,560 (1) 3m 84yds (12)	TVI
1-21	CARLENRG (42) (D) 6 11-5..... T Durrell 132
Runs: 3	Wins: 2(GS) Places: 1
Owner: Highclere Thoroughbred Racing-carlenr	
Trainer: D Skelton	
2 314L2	CAUGHTINYOURTRANCE (35) 7 11-0..... Charlotte Jones 135
Runs: 11	Wins: 3(GS) Places: 4
Owner: Mr A Horabin	
Trainer: J Moffatt	
23-11	COUNTRY CODE (26) (F) 6 11-0..... J Bowen 138
Runs: 4	Wins: 2(GS) Places: 2
Owner: Mr Eric A Elliott	
Trainer: Ruth Jefferson	
41L-1L1	FOUNTAINS BLENNHEIN (23) (T) 7 11-0..... R Dingle 131
Runs: 6	Wins: 3(GS,G) Places: 1
Owner: The Fountains Partnership	
Trainer: A Honeyball	
2141	GET ON GEORGE (26) (C) 6 11-0..... D McMenamin 138
Runs: 5	Wins: 2(GS,G) Places: 1
Owner: Mrs S Smith	
Trainer: J Parkinson & S Smith	
2152L4	INTOSOMETHINGGOOD (42) 5 11-0..... T Bellamy 137
Runs: 13	Wins: 3(GS,G) Places: 3
Owner: Mr M Stavrou	
Trainer: N & W Twiston-Davies	
PI-1051	KENT DE THAIX (41) 6 11-0..... N Moscrop 131
Runs: 8	Wins: 3(GS,F) Places: 1
Owner: Spraycad UK Ne & Ls Bloodstock	
Trainer: R Menzies	
2-11	KICOUR LA (45) 6 11-0..... K Woods ★145
Runs: 3	Wins: 2(GS) Places: 1
Owner: Momentum Bloodstock Partners	
Trainer: P Pauling	
122/1	ROCKING MAN (80) (T) 5 11-0..... D Johnston 133
Runs: 4	Wins: 2(GS,G) Places: 1
Owner: Walters Plant Hire Ltd	
Trainer: S Thomas	
102-212	THEDEVILUNO (49) 7 11-0..... S O'Keefe 144
Runs: 6	Wins: 1(S) Places: 3
Owner: Youoktodrive Syndicate	
Trainer: P Nolan (IRE)	
2-1143	THE LAST CLOUD (29) 6 11-0..... B Hughes 143
Runs: 8	Wins: 3(G) Places: 1
Owner: Mr B Hague, Mrs W Duffus & Partner	
Trainer: P Neville	
121-21	● THE PRICE OF PEACE (49) (D,T) 7 11-0..... J J Burke 135
Runs: 5	Wins: 2(GS,G) Places: 2
Owner: Peace Of Corker Partnership	
Trainer: R Curtis	

VISOR: No. 2 TONGUE STRAP: No. 2, 8.
SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12.
SP FORECAST: 4 Carlenrg, 9-2 Rocking Man, 5 Kicour La, 6 The Deviluno, 7 The Price Of Peace, Country Code, 12 Fountains Blennhein, 14 Intosomethinggood, 16 Others.
2025: Yellow Car 7-11-0, Nick Slatter 10-1 (D Killahena & G McPherson), 6 ran.
GUIDE: Having relished a step up in distance when landing a Grade 2 at Cheltenham (3m, gd-sft) last month, **Carlenrg** is likely to give another bold bid at the same level. However, Dan Skelton's charge is burdened with a 5lb penalty and may prove vulnerable, with his previous Chepstow (2m3f, gd-sft) conquerer **ROCKING MAN** getting the nod. There was plenty to like about the seven-year-old's hurdling bob that day and connections waste little time in stepping him up in class and trip. **Kicour La** is the pick of the remainder.

TRACK FACTS: GOING: Soft. Left Handed. **TOP TRACK JOCKEY** (2021-26): Brian Hughes 16% Strike rate. **TOP TRACK TRAINER** (2021-26): N Henderson 22% Strike rate. **FIRST TIME:** 1:30 Rockola Vogue (cheek pieces), 2:05 Walking On Air (cheek pieces, tongue strap), 2:38 Harsh (tongue strap), Ki Woo (cheek pieces, tongue strap), 12:20 Sovereign Applause (tongue strap).

1.30 YORKSHIRE ROSE MARES' HDL (G2)

£34,170 (1) 3m 84yds (8)	TVI
143-337	JETARA (27) (C&D) 8 11-8..... J Bowen ★152
Runs: 25	Wins: 7(GS,G) Places: 9
Owner: Mr G McGrath	
Trainer: J Harrington (IRE)	
5P2213	DREAM ON BABY (26) 6 11-6..... D McMenamin 144
Runs: 12	Wins: 2(G) Places: 3
Owner: Seven Heads Group Syndicate	
Trainer: E Mullins (IRE)	
3343-12	● FEET OF A DANCER (26) 7 11-6..... S O'Keefe 147
Runs: 15	Wins: 5(GS,G) Places: 5
Owner: Cathy Byrne	
Trainer: P Nolan (IRE)	
412-341	LAVIDA ADIVA (42) (C&D) 7 11-6..... B Hughes 140
Runs: 17	Wins: 5(GS,G) Places: 5
Owner: Drew & Ailsa Russell	
Trainer: Ruth Jefferson	
3547LL	MOUSEY BROWN (26) (D) 9 11-2..... P M O'Brien 143
Runs: 28	Wins: 7(GS,G) Places: 2
Owner: Mr Alan E Smith	
Trainer: D A McLoughlin (IRE)	
1-01L	POTTERSVILLE (23) (T) 7 11-2..... D Johnston 133
Runs: 4	Wins: 2(GS,G) Places: 1
Owner: Mr David McDermott	
Trainer: R Curtis	
214-113	ROCKOLA VOGUE (26) (D) 7 11-2..... K Woods 139
Runs: 12	Wins: 5(GS,G) Places: 5
Owner: Shaw Racing	
Trainer: D Killahena & G McPherson	
1222-43	THAT'LL DO MOSS (21) 7 11-2..... J J Burke 146
Runs: 10	Wins: 3(GS,G) Places: 3
Owner: Deva Racing TDM	
Trainer: F O'Brien	

TONGUE STRAP: No. 5 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 1, 7.
SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 3, 1, 4, 5, 7, 8.
SP FORECAST: 9-4 Feet Of A Dancer, 11-4 Jetara, 5 That'll Do Moss, Dream On Baby, 8 Lavidadiva, 14 Rockola Vogue, 20 Mousey Brown, 25 Pottersville.
2025: Jetara 7-11-6, James Bowen 10-3 (J Harrington), 6 ran.
GUIDE: Having supplemented her Listed success at Punchestown (2m2f, sft-hvy) with a decent second in a Grade 3 at Leopardstown (2m4f, gd-yld) last month, **FEET OF A DANCER** makes grand appeal in her current heat. The seven-year-old posted a good fourth in the Pertemps Final (3m, gd-sft) last season and this extra yardage may prove fruitful. Last year's hero (gd-sft) **Jetara** merits respect in her bid to defend her crown and she isn't taken lightly dropping in class, while fellow Irish raider **Dream On Baby** is the pick of the remainder.

2.05 VIRGIN BET GREAT YORKSHIRE CHS

£56,950 (1) 2m 7f 214yds (10)	TVI
5461-11	● DEEP CAVE (35) (D,T) 8 12-0..... J Tudor 144
Runs: 18	Wins: 7(GS,G) Places: 1
Owner: See Howell	
Trainer: Christian Williams	
11P-041	KING'S THRESHOLD (26) (D) 9 11-0..... T Bellamy 142
Runs: 21	Wins: 6(GS,G) Places: 5
Owner: Sailing To Byzantium	
Trainer: E Lavelle	
8-8L12	JOSH THE BOSS (29) (C) 7 11-6..... J J Neild(7) 145
Runs: 19	Wins: 6(GS,G) Places: 1
Owner: Mr J D Neild	
Trainer: N & W Twiston-Davies	
322-784	JOYEUX MACHIN (42) 9 11-6..... T Durrell 144
Runs: 28	Wins: 4(G) Places: 5
Owner: Utb Racing	
Trainer: D Skelton	
21P-531	DOCKPICKEDME (42) (C&D) 10 11-4..... C Maggs(5) 146
Runs: 31	Wins: 9(GS,G) Places: 4
Owner: Mr R Key	
Trainer: R Hobson	
34P-221	GRAND GESTE (35) 7 11-2..... D McMenamin 143
Runs: 12	Wins: 1(S) Places: 5
Owner: The Acire Bottomers	
Trainer: J Parkinson & S Smith	
L3F0P-1	WALKING ON AIR (38) (F) 9 11-0..... B Hughes 131
Runs: 17	Wins: 2(GS,G) Places: 3
Owner: The Cheeky Pups	
Trainer: Faye Bramley	
L250-51	DARTMOOR PIRATE (34) (T) 7 10-12..... R Dingle 144
Runs: 13	Wins: 2(S) Places: 5
Owner: Geegeez Co Uk Xkii	
Trainer: A Honeyball	
L1H-23	NEW ORDER (23) (D) 8 10-12..... D Bass 144
Runs: 16	Wins: 4(GS,G) Places: 4
Owner: Mf Partnership	
Trainer: C Longsdon	
F21-472	KELCE (29) (D) 8 10-5..... B Harris(3) ★147
Runs: 17	Wins: 2(GS,G) Places: 5
Owner: Paul McKee	
Trainer: N Mulholland	

TONGUE STRAP: No. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, 10.
SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 8, 1, 5, 6, 3, 10, 2, 9.
SP FORECAST: 10-3 Grand Geste, 7-2 Deep Cave, 6 Dockpickeme, 15-2 Walking On Air, 8 Dartmoor Pirate, Josh The Boss, 12 King's Threshold, New Order, 14 Others.
2025: Dockpickeme 9-11-0, Charlie Maggs(5) 9-1 (R Hobson), 13 ran.

THE SCOUT

12.20 Highland Crystal	2.38 Newton Tornado
12.55 THE PRICE OF PEACE (nap)	3.13 Mighty Bandit
1.30 Feet Of A Dancer	3.48 Diamond Street
2.05 Deep Cave	

GUIDE: **Deep Cave** is in the form of his life after taking the Silver Cup at Ascot (3m, gd-sft) last month and holds an obvious chance, but he is now 2lb higher and this represents another tough task. With that in mind, a chance to be taken on **NEW ORDER**, who produced a good effort when making the frame at Cheltenham (3m1f, gd) on New Years Day and races off an unchanged rating. The eight-year-old has scope for further improvement and could take a step forward to strike. **Grand Geste** and **King's Threshold** also merit consideration.

2.38 NOVICES' LIMITED HANDICAP CHASE

£10,562 (3) 2m 7f 214yds (8)	
1 2-L3UOL	HARSH (26) (T) M Bowen 6 11-0..... J Bowen 133
2 221-FIP	● NEWTON TORNAO (26) (D) (T) R Curtis 7 11-8..... D Bass ★139
3 22-0116	NOBLE PARK (29) N Henderson 7 11-6..... D Johnston 135
4 L81253	POUNDING POET (26) T Lacey 10 11-5..... Doubtful
5 411-662	KI WO (26) O Greenall & J Guerriero 6 11-1..... T Durrell 136
6 06-3L51	CHASINGOUTTHEBLUES (28) (D,F) M Walford 7 11-1..... B Hughes 131
7 33-233F	AS LEGENDS HAVE IT (28) B Pauling 7 10-12..... C Pritchard(3) 134
8 45-2211	PADDY O'MAHLER (25) J Parkinson & S Smith 8 10-5..... D McMenamin 133

BLINKERS: No. 1 VISOR: No. 4 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 1, 4, 5.
CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 5, 7, 8. **SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS:** Nos. 7, 6, 2, 8, 4.
SP FORECAST: 9-4 Noble Park, 7-2 Newton Tornado, 9-2 Paddy O'Mahler, 6 As Legends Have It, 13-2 Chasingouttheblues, 8 Ki Woo, 50 Harsh.
2025: No corresponding race.

3.13 HANDICAP CHASE

£26,015 (3) 2m 78yds (8)	
1 L12-43P	BROOKIE (63) (C&D) (T) A Honeyball 9 12-0..... Doubtful
2 6189-IL	PETIT TONNERRE (84) (C&D) J A & O'Neill 8 11-2..... K Broman 146
3 9P/LP-21	● MIGHTY BANDIT (38) (D,F) W Greatrex 6 10-10..... J Bowen 149
4 43PL-55	HARPER'S BROOK (28) D Skelton 10 10-12..... K Woods ★153
5 634-L1L	GRAIN D'OUAIRIES (25) (C&D,F) D McCain 10 10-10..... B Hughes 148
6 P224UL	GABRIEL'S GETAWAY (21) (C&D) (T) A Honeyball 9 10-9..... R Dingle 152
7 3-13L2L	HERE COMES GEORGIE (35) D Cunha 8 10-8..... Doubtful
8 F6L-441	MILAN TINO (38) (D) T R George 6 10-2..... J J Burke 148

BLINKERS: No. 6 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 1, 5, 6, 7.
CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 2, 4.
SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 1, 5, 4, 3, 2.
SP FORECAST: 5-2 Mighty Bandit, 11-2 Milan Tino, 10 Petit Tonneire, Gabriel's Getaway, Harper's Brook, 12 Grain D'oudairies.
2025: Petit Tonneire 7-10-4, Richie McLernon 7-2 (J & A O'Neill), 7 ran.

3.48 VIRGIN BET OPEN NH FLAT RACE

£2,451 (5) 2m 128yds (11)	
1 5	CAPITAL HUE (29) N & W Twiston-Davies 5 11-2..... J Turner(5) 98
2	COUNTRY PURSUITS 1 Williams 5 11-2..... B Hughes 98
3	● DIAMOND STREET D Skelton 5 11-2..... T Durrell -
4	DUKEBOXROCK (T) R Curtis 5 11-2..... D Johnston -
5 3-7	FINAL SURPRISE (60) A Ralph 5 11-2..... J J Burke 102
6 2	HOBBSAN'S DAY (98) A Ralph 6 11-2..... J Tudor ★116
7 0	MARBLE SKY (28) A Crook 5 11-2..... J Williamson(3) 71
8 3	POPALOT (59) (F) P Niven 5 11-2..... D McMenamin 99
9 31	ELDERFLOWER TONIC (62) (T) M Bowen 5 10-9..... J Bowen -
10 53	TWENTIES ICON (35) (T) Kieran Burke 4 10-3..... T Bellamy 96
11	EBONY EBBS Andrew Martin 4 10-2..... Doubtful

HOOD: No. 10.
SP FORECAST: 5-2 Hobbsan's Day, 3 Elderflower Tonic, 4 Diamond Street, 10 Twenties Icon, Final Surprise, 12 Capital Hue, 14 Others.
2025: Storming George 5-11-2, Jack Quinlan 25-1 (N King), 16 ran.

BEATEN FAVOURITES: 12:20 Laysoft, 2:05 Josh The Boss(hcp ch), 2:38 As Legends Have It(hcp ch), Newton Tornado(hcp ch), Noble Park(hcp ch). **LONGEST TRAVELLER:** Highland Crystal (12:20), The Deviluno (12:55), Feet Of A Dancer (1:30), Dream On Baby (1:30), Jetara (1:30), Mousey Brown (1:30) Ireland; Harsh (2:38) & Elderflower Tonic (3:48) 295 miles. **STABLE SWITCH:** 12:20 Manlaga from M Rolland in France to N Henderson, 3:48 Elderflower Tonic from D P Berry in Ireland to M Bowen, Hobbsan's Day from T Lacey to A Ralph.

LINGFIELD SKYSPORTSRACING

THE SCOUT	
11.58 Rogue Identity	2.14 Jack Langley
12.33 Star Of Albion	2.48 Jackson Street
1.08 Nebrook Star	3.26 Rumba Bay
1.43 Sam's Xpress	4.00 Twirler

11.58 MIDNITE: BUILT FOR 2026 NOT 2006 APPRENTICE HCAP

£3,768 (Class 6) 1m 2f (10 declared)	
1 (5) 4712L-2	EARLINGTON (7) (D,F) Charlie Clover 5 9-10..... Liam Wright(3) 69
2 (1) 30665-7	OCEAN HEIGHTS (21) (D) D Pipe 9 9-9..... J Dace(3) 69
3 (9) 202507-	CRAFTER (33) (C&D) M Loughnane 8 9-9..... W Fentiman ★74
4 (6) 40361-6	MOONLIGHT BOMB (22) E Dunlop 4 9-8..... J Nicholls(3) 68
5 (10) 5/983-4	HAWAIIAN KING (22) M Madgwick 4 9-7..... A Volkhansky 66
6 (8) 143237-	BETA READER (47) Mrs L Mogan 4 9-7..... T Cameron(5) 68
7 (7) 51574-0	SANDS OF HAVANA (17) R Hughes 4 9-6..... D J Murphy(7) 68
8 (2) 4/4135-	● ROGUE IDENTITY (43) James Owen 4 9-6..... Mason Paetel(3) 65
9 (3) 21455L-	TATMEEN (38) L Dace 5 9-4..... Jude Fernandes(7) 66
10 (4) 8038-82	PRIDE OF NEPAL (10) (D) A Carroll 8 9-4..... R Kavanagh(3) 70

BLINKERS: No. 7 TONGUE STRAP: No. 10 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 6, 10 HOOD: No. 8.
SP FORECAST: 2 Earlington, 4 Pride Of Nepal, 5 Hawaiian King, 7 Rogue Identity, 8 Moonlight Bomb, 16 Tatmeen, Crafter, Beta Reader, 20 Others.
2025: No corresponding race.

12.33 RESTRICTED NOVICE STAKES

£4,320 (5) 6f 1yds (5)	
1 (4) 7422-	● STAR OF ALBION (123) A Perrett 3 9-7..... T Marquand 81
2 (2) 9223-43	SOMEBODY (11) R Spencer 3 9-5..... G Wood 75
3 (3) 74-	ANGEL SUMMER (3) A Allen 3 9-2..... D Keenan 61
4 (1) L-	ANALEESA (37) C Cox 3 9-0..... Georgia Dobie ★
5 (5) 3246-	LOVETHISSWAGYAN (182) (F) Ollie Sangster 3 9-0..... N Currie ★87

BLINKERS: No. 1 VISOR: No. 2 TONGUE STRAP: No. 2 CHEEK PIECES: No. 4.
SP FORECAST: Events Star Of Albion, 2 Lovethiswagay, 4 Somebody, 25 Angel Summer, 33 Analeesa.
2025: Hello Zaman 3-9-0, Clifford Lee 8-11 Fav (J Tate), drawn (8), 8 ran.

1.08 ALWAYS GAMBLE RESPONSIBLY AT BETMGM HCAP 3YO

£4,397 (5) 5f 6yds (9)	
1 (1) 4134-	● NEBROOK STAR (177) Lemos Souza 9-9..... D Keenan 68
2 (6) 5L-4	ALVIN (21) (F) G Scott 9-8..... C Shepherd 72
3 (8) 82332-1	COOL MOLLY (22) (D) Ollie Sangster 9-7..... P L Jamn 72
4 (2) 445156-	HENRYTHENATE (87) (D) S C Williams 9-5..... J Dace(5) 71
5 (3) 4161LL-	BEACH PARTEE (33) (C&D) W Knight 9-5..... L Morris 72
6 (7) 25721L-	MWAKI (60) (D) R Spencer 9-3..... G Wood 71
7 (4) 4282-31	FAR TOO FIZZY (3) (C) Loughnane 9-3(6ex)..... H Doyle ★77
8 (5) 41421-3	MAD UNICORIN (4) C D Loughnane 9-2..... P Cosgrave 70
9 (9) 52622-2	FILLY FODEN (17) B Millman 9-2..... L Edmunds 74

BLINKERS: No. 1 VISOR: No. 5 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 1, 4 HOOD: No. 6.
SP FORECAST: 7-4 Far Too Fizzy, 9-2 Cool Molly, 5 Filly Foden, 8 Nebrook Star, 10 Alvin, 12 Mad Unicorn, Henrythenate, 14 Mwaki, 20 Beach Partee.
2025: Frankies Dream 8-11, Joey Haynes 13-8 Fav (J Candlish), drawn (3), 7 ran.

1.43 MIDNITE: BUILT FOR 2026 NOT 2006 HANDICAP

1 (1)	14213-5	TOOLATETONEGOTIAE (12) (C&D) Daisy Hillias 4 9-9.....	Millie Wonnacott(5)	80
2 (5)	11251L-	● SAM'S XPRESS (25) (C&D) J & S Birkett 6 9-9.....	D E Hogan	81
3 (6)	63610-5	LEQUINTO (16) (D) A Carroll 9 9-9.....	W Carson	80
4 (3)	35/19-6	CORONADO KING (12) A Watson 5 9-9.....	H Crouch ★	83
5 (7)	31266-2	FIORILLA PRINCESS (16) (D) C Wallis 4 9-8.....	H Crouch	80
6 (8)	13L6-41	MICK'S SPIRIT (10) (C&D,F) C Allen 8 9-8.....	D Keenan	79
7 (2)	5157L6-	BALON D'OR (24) (D) S Dow 5 9-4.....	P Bradley	76
8 (4)	1957-7L	BINT HAVANA GOLD (12) R Hughes 5 9-1.....	F Marsh	80

REED'S WELL ON THE WAY TO A FINE START

FROM **NEIL MCLEMAN** in Dubai
PATRICK REED is on course to pay off his \$1million in fines for playing on LIV Golf this season after taking the halfway lead at the Hero Dubai Desert Classic.

"Go ahead and win early and that will take care of it," said the American.

DP World Tour members are always refused permission to play on the Saudi-backed tour and are slapped with penalties of up to \$100,000 (£74,000) for each of the 14 tournaments. Europe Ryder Cup stars Jon Rahm and Tyrrell Hatton (inset) are refusing to pay and have

appealed the sanctions. But former Masters champion Reed, who banked an estimated \$40m for joining LIV in 2022, is willing to pay the price to play around the world. The first prize in the opening Rolex Series event of 2026 is \$1.53m.

The world No.44 said: "I've always loved being on this tour and supporting this tour and I don't plan on stopping."

"If we play well enough and pay fines to still continue to show support on this tour, then so be it. Do I have to earn \$1m to break even? Oh, yeah. Trying to wrap your head around all of it, it's confusing. I'd rather just tee it up and play, and if it

costs me whatever, I'll go play. Play well and it offsets. Go ahead and win early and that will take care of it.

"Hopefully go out and have a chance to win Sunday and allow golf to do all the talking."

Reed earned \$9.7m on LIV Golf last year and another \$2.6m on the DP World Tour.

The 2018 Masters champion shot a flawless second-round 66 to move to nine-under par at the Emirates Golf Club, which included a 42-foot putt for eagle at the par five 13th.

Reed leads by one from fellow former Ryder Cup player Andy Sullivan, who had a run of four birdies from the third.

However the Englishman's highlight came at the last, where his approach from 247 yards set up a four-foot putt for eagle to card an excellent 65.

Italian duo Andrea Pavan and first-round leader Francesco Molinari are in a share of third place, on seven under, just ahead of Nicolai Hojgaard.

Hatton, the defending champion, chipped in twice on the back nine - including for eagle on 17 - to shoot 69 and reach the halfway stage on five-under, four strokes behind Reed.

Playing partner Rory McIlroy is three shots further back after a 69.

Dubai-based Tommy Fleetwood, who opened with a 73, shot a 72 to make the cut on the line on one-over par.



IN THE BLACK A win would wipe out Reed's fines for the year

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I Vonn to be golden oldie



THE X-FACTOR

Kenworthy has a new run which could put him in the mix for a slopestyle medal

GUS FIRED UP BY LINDSEY'S RUN

BY **CHARLIE BENNETT**

GUS KENWORTHY is the self-described grandad of the slopes but the old dog has been learning some new tricks in a bid to win a magical Winter Olympic gold.

The 34-year-old will compete against several athletes almost half his age in slopestyle, where flicks and flips over obstacles is the order of the day.

Kenworthy is doing it for the golden oldies and revealed skiing superstar Lindsey Vonn's comeback has inspired his own Olympic return.

The social media star, who has 1.2million Instagram followers, came out of a three-and-a-half-year retirement this season with the goal of reaching his fourth Winter Games.

His first World Cup was in December and it has not taken him long to get back into the swing of it, with an Olympic quota place bagged almost immediately.

It is a similar story for Vonn (below), the alpine skiing legend who is back at it aged 41 and has won her first World Cup event in eight years to prompt talk of a remarkable medal at Milano Cortina 2026.

"Her comeback is inspiring and I think she is inspiring," Kenworthy said. "Her season has been absolutely insane."

"We've been rooting one another on. I've sent messages of support as she's been going through the season, and she's done the same to me. I think there's defi-

nately a mutual respect there. We haven't sat down and hashed out [our] comebacks or anything, or had a heart-to-heart, we've both been in the thick of it."

Kenworthy, who was born in Chelmsford, represented the USA at his first two Olympics and won slopestyle silver at Sochi 2014.

He switched to Team GB ahead of the 2022 Games in Beijing but stepped back to focus on his acting career, with credits including a series of USA hit American Horror Story.

However, he is perhaps best known for being the first action sports star to come out as gay, 10 years ago, and frank honesty when discussing mental health.

On the slopes, he remains a force to be reckoned with, even if slopestyle is traditionally a young man's game, with teenagers and 20-somethings the best around.

"I wouldn't have gone forward and set out on this journey if I didn't have that confidence that I would make it back to the Games," he said.

"I feel old, but it's good. It's fun. I have been working on something new. It's a medal-worthy run if I execute."

● **TNT Sports on discovery+** will be the go-to destination in the U.K to watch everything of Milano Cortina 2026 live all in one place, with over 850 hours of action from every sport, venue, and medal event.



WHAM! BAM! SEE YA, CAM

**AN A-Z OF
BRITISH
DEFEATS**
Norrie was
knocked out
by Alexander
Zverev to end
British interest
in the singles

Norrie crashes out on another bad day for Brits

FROM **YASMIN SYED** in Melbourne
CAMERON NORRIE'S barren run against Alexander Zverev continued - but the British No.2 insisted he exited the Australian Open with his head held high.

Norrie suffered a seventh straight Tour defeat at the hands of the German.

He suffered a 7-6 4-6 6-3 6-1 defeat to last year's runner-up, who got the job done with his 16th ace of the night.

Norrie (shaking hands with Zverev, right), the last Brit standing in the singles draw, said: "I thought the level was really good."

"First three sets, very good. There was maybe a slight dip in that third set, but it was kind of constant pressure, I thought, in all departments of the game."

"He was serving well, returning well, forehand, backhand, moving, and I had to

really take a lot of risks to hang with him. "I can take a lot of confidence knowing I can play at that level with him, but I dropped off at the beginning of the fourth (set), for sure. That went very quickly."

"So it was a nice match. I played really well. I enjoyed 95 per cent of it."

"It was just that beginning of the fourth, though, feeling not so good about that."

Norrie, 30, has now lost to big guns Zverev, Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz in his last four Grand Slam appearances.

But he preferred to focus on the fact that he is at least mixing it with the very best at the highest level.

"I'm looking forward to the year, and I want to keep going out there and

playing matches like this where I can push myself and challenge these guys," he said. "It says a lot about my focus and shows why I'm a bit more experienced than some of the other guys."

"I'm in best-of-five-set matches, and it's good fun playing these tournaments and nice to come here feeling healthy and enjoying it."

"I'm still disappointed not to go further, but these are the

matches you want to be playing." It is the second major in a row where Britain has had a first-week wipeout in the singles.

And there was more disappointment in the doubles where No.1 seeds Julian Cash and Lloyd Glasspool were shocked by Australian wildcard pair James McCabe and Li Tu.

Cash was broken while serving for the first set, and the Wimbledon champions went on to lose 7-6 6-4.

Glasspool said: "I thought we actually started pretty good. We were in a lot of the return games, and holding pretty comfortably, it was going as planned."

Cash added: "I think on a court like that, especially with the Aussie crowds, it's always dangerous if you give them a look at your serve."



Coco happy to survive friendly Hail storm

FROM **YASMIN SYED** in Melbourne
COCO GAUFF came from a set down to beat good friend Hailey Baptiste 3-6 6-0 6-3.

The No.3 seed, who faces Czech Karolina Muchova in the fourth round, has known her fellow American Baptiste (together, left) since their junior days. She said: "We're both competitors, so we don't take personal things on the court."

"I have just gotten used to seeing both of us do well." Two-time

champion Aryna Sabalenka had to save four set points in seeing off Anastasia Potapova 7-6 7-6.

The world No.1 said: "There are days where you just have to be there, have to fight, and try to put the ball back." Sabalenka will now face 19-year-old Victoria Mboko, who toppled Clara Tauson 7-6 5-7 6-3.

Canadian Mboko said: "I've never played a current No.1 in the world. That's going to be a very different experience." In the men's draw it was

smooth sailing for top seed Carlos Alcaraz, who breezed past Corentin Moutet 6-2 6-4 6-1.

There were plenty of hotshots, tweeners and underarm serves and Alcaraz joked: "When you play someone like Corentin, you don't know what's going to be next!"

"I had so much fun on the court, as you could see. I think we both pulled off great shots."

Next up for Alcaraz is a meeting with 19th seed Tommy Paul.

WORLD OF SPORT

Hamilton's big step into the unknown

BY **DANIEL MOXON**

LEWIS HAMILTON claimed it will be a "huge challenge" to get to grips with his new Ferrari car.

The seven-time Formula One champion yesterday got behind the wheel of Ferrari's SF-26 moments after it was unveiled at their base in Maranello, Italy.

But with new engine and aero rules coming into force for the upcoming campaign, no one knows what to expect. Hamilton, 41, said:

FORMULA ONE

"The 2026 season represents a huge challenge for everyone, probably the biggest regulation change I have experienced in my career."

"As a driver, being involved from the very start in the development of such a different car has been a particularly fascinating challenge."

"It will be an extremely important year from a technical perspective. It is a challenge we face together as a team."



HAMILTON



COCO HOPS:
Gauff serves in Melbourne

MATTHEW HUMPHREYS claimed 4-16 as Ireland edged out Italy by three wickets in the first T20 of a three-match series in Dubai.

The slow left-armer was the pick of the bowlers but he was backed up by two wickets apiece from Mark Adair, Barry McCarthy and Gareth Delany as Italy were all out for 118 in 18.1 overs.

Italy put up a fight as Ireland lurched from 93-2 to 112-7. Harry Tector (41) and Lorcan Tucker (34)

CRICKET

broke the back of the chase before Ireland's middle-order faltered, but they got over the line with three balls to spare.

This series, which continues tomorrow, acts as a warm-up ahead of the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka, which gets under way on February 7.

Italy will be the surprise package at the event - and will face England in Kolkata on February 16.

1. Which Thai rider won the final race of the 2025 Asia Road Racing Championship at the Buriram International Circuit?
2. Who took 5-34 for New Zealand in the first innings of the first Test against West Indies in Christchurch last month?
3. Which non-League club knocked holders Crystal Palace out of this season's FA Cup?
4. Which boxer beat Henry Cooper in 1971 to take his British, Commonwealth and European heavyweight titles?
5. Which American athlete won the women's high jump at the 1988 Olympics?
6. Which German tennis player did Monica Seles beat in the 1996 Australian Open women's singles final?
7. Which Australian did John Spencer beat in the 1971 World Snooker Championship final?
8. What name is given to the officials on a racecourse who uphold the rules?
9. Which of golf's majors was won by Al Geiberger, Don January and Julius Boros in the 1960s?
10. Which Ukrainian pole vaulter set 35 world records in his career?

ANSWERS: 1. Nakarin Atthaphuvapat, 2. Jacob Duffy, 3. Maccafield, 4. Joe Bugner, 5. Louise Ritter, 6. Luke Huber, 7. Warren Simpson, 8. Stewards, 9. PGA Championship, 10. Sergey Bubka.

10 to tackle
RATINGS
0-3 Oh dear
4-6 Small beer
7-9 So near
10 Sporting Seer

Curran on mission to turn rank form

BY SCOTT HUNT

SAM CURRAN admits England need to find the formula to win 50-over matches as their World Cup qualification comes under threat.

England slipped to a 19-run defeat by Sri Lanka in the first one-day international in Colombo on Thursday and have now lost 12 of their past 16 ODIs.

Only the top eight teams in the rankings by March next year will qualify automatically for the 2027 World Cup, alongside co-hosts South Africa and Zimbabwe.

England sit eighth, raising the embarrassing threat of missing out on automatic qualification.

"We know we need to start winning some games," Curran (right) said ahead of today's second match in Colombo. "Saturday

CRICKET

will be a big game and hopefully we can keep the series alive.

"We know we're struggling a little bit but we really want to put it right and show how good we are."

England could do with a morale-boosting win after their 4-1 Ashes defeat and a winter dogged by off-field controversies.

Captain Harry Brook said he needs to regain the squad's trust having been fined for a nightclub altercation with a bouncer in New Zealand in October, news which emerged this month.

But Curran, who was not part of the Ashes, said: "I don't think it's a trust thing at all. Everyone makes a little mistake here and there.

"Full backing of what he is and what he does. He's a quality player and a great leader."

SPORT IN BRIEF

BASKETBALL

NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION: Orlando Magic 97 Charlotte Hornets 124, Philadelphia 76ers 128 Houston Rockets 122 (OT), Washington Wizards 97 Denver Nuggets 107, Dallas Mavericks 123 Golden State Warriors 115, Minnesota Timberwolves 115 Chicago Bulls 120, Utah Jazz 109 San Antonio Spurs 126, Portland Trail Blazers 127 Miami Heat 110, LA Clippers 112 LA Lakers 104.

CYCLING

UCI WORLD TOUR SANTOS TOUR DOWN UNDER, AUSTRALIA, Stage 3: 1 S Welsford (Aus) INEOS Grenadiers 3h 26m 43s, 2 T Lund Andresen (Den) Decathlon CMA CGM Team, 3 L Bower (Nzl) Groupama-FDJ United, 4 J Stewart (Gbr) NSN Cycling Team, 5 A Gate (Nzl) XDS Astana Team all at same time

General Classification: 1 J Vine (Aus) UAE Team Emirates-XRG 9h 50m 16s, 2 J Narvaez (Ecu) UAE Team Emirates-XRG +6s, 3 M Schmid (Swi) Team Jayco-AlUla +1m 05s, 4 H Sweeny (Aus) EF Education-EasyPost +1:12, 5 M Brenner (Ger) Tudor Pro Cycling Team +1:14.

GOLF

DP WORLD TOUR HERO DUBAI DESERT CLASSIC, EMIRATES GC, UAE—(Gbr & Irl unless stated, Par 72): **135** P Reed (USA) 69 66, **136** A Sullivan 71 65, **137** F Molinari (Ita) 65 72, A Pavan (Ita) 69 68, **138** N Hoejgaard (Den) 71 67, **139** T Hatton 70 69, J Schaper (Rsa) 71 68, O Lindell (Fin) 70 69, M Lindberg (Swe) 67 72, H Du Plessis (Rsa) 71 68, **140** D Puig (Spa) 72 68, W Ding (Chn) 69 71, **141** E Ferguson 70 71, C Maas (Rsa) 70 71, S Lowry 70 71, T McKibbin 71 70, R Gouveia (Por) 72 69, N Lemke (Swe) 71 70, J. C. Ritchie (Rsa) 68 73, **142** R McLirroy 73 69, R Fox (Nzl) 72 70, M Couvra (Fra) 70 72, A Wu (Chn) 71 71, D Bradbury 74 68, T Olesen (Den) 70 72, V Hovland (Nor) 73 69, D Hillier (Nzl) 70 72, J Luiten (Ned) 72 70, R Cabrera (Spa) 71 71, J Dantorp (Swe) 73 69, D Micheluzzi (Aus) 70 72, Z Lombard (Rsa) 71 71, **143** G Forrest 70 73, N von Dellingshausen (Ger) 69 74, A Del Rey (Spa) 72 71, J Veerman (USA) 69 74, F Lacroix (Fra) 74 69, D van Driel (Ned) 74 69, R Neergaard-Petersen (Den) 75 68, E Pepperell 70 73, M Armitage 71 72, J Campillo (Spa) 70 73, A Fitzpatrick 75 68, R Langasque (Fra) 73 70, U Coussaoud (Fra) 74 69, I Cantero (Spa) 71 72, S Crocker (USA) 75 68, T Detry (Bel) 73 70.

TENNIS

AUSTRALIAN OPEN MELBOURNE PARK, AUSTRALIA—Mens Singles 3rd rd: (25) Learner Tien (USA) bt Nuno Borges (Por) 7-6 (11-9) 6-4 6-2; (18) Francisco Cerundolo (Arg) bt (13) Andrey Rublev (Rus) 6-3 7-6 (7-4) 6-3; (10) Alexander Bublik (Kaz) bt Tomas Martin Etcheverry (Arg) 7-6 (7-4) 7-6 (7-6) 6-4; (1) Carlos Alcaraz (Spa) bt (32) Corentin Moutet (Fra) 6-2 6-4 6-1; (3) Alexander Zverev (Ger) bt (26) Cameron Norrie (Gbr) 7-5 4-6 6-3 6-1; (19) Tommy Paul (USA) bt (14) Alejandro Davidovich Fokina (Spa) 6-1 6-1 ret (11) Daniil Medvedev (Rus) bt Fabian Marozsan (Hun) 6-7 (5-7) 4-6 7-5 6-0 6-3; (6) Alex De Minaur (Aus) bt (29) Frances Tiafoe (USA) 6-3 6-4 7-5

Womens Singles 3rd: (8) Mirra Andreeva (Rus) bt Elena Gabriela Ruse (Rom) 6-3 6-4; Yulia Putintseva (Kaz) bt Zeynep Sonmez (Tur) 6-3 6-7 (3-7) 6-3; (12) Elina Svitolina (Ukr) bt (23) Diana Shnaider (Rus) 7-6 (7-4) 6-3; (3) Cori Gauff (USA) bt Hailey Baptiste (USA) 3-6 6-0 6-3; (19) Karolina Muchova (Cze) bt Magda Linette (Pol) 6-1 6-1; (29) Iva Jovic (USA) bt (7) Jasmine Paolini (Ita) 6-2 7-6 (7-3) (17) Victoria Mboko (Can) bt (14) Clara Tauson (Den) 7-6 (7-5) 5-7 6-3; (1) Aryna Sabalenka (Blr) bt Anastasia Potapova (Aut) 7-6 (7-4) 7-6 (9-7).

TODAY'S DIARY

(3pm unless stated)

CRICKET

Second One Day International: Sri Lanka v England (Colombo, 9am).

ICE HOCKEY

Elite League: Belfast Giants v Dundee Stars, Cardiff Devils v Fife Flyers, Nottingham Panthers v Guildford Flames, Sheffield Steelers v Manchester Storm (All 7.00).

RUGBY LEAGUE

Challenge Cup—2nd rnd: Sheffield v Whitehaven (2.30), Stanningley v Hunslet (1.30), Heworth v Keighley (1.30), Ince Rose Bridge v Swinton (2pm), Wigan St Jukes v Barrow (2pm), Hammersmith Hills Hoists v Salford RLFC.

RUGBY UNION

Gallagher Prem (3pm): Exeter v Bristol, Harlequins v Leicester (3.05), Sale v Northampton (5.30), Saracens v Newcastle.

United Rugby Championship: Cardiff Rugby v Benetton Treviso (7.45), Connacht v Leinster (5.30), Scarlets v Ulster, Stormers v Sharks (5.30), Zebre v Glasgow (7.45).

HIGH FLIERS

BY ADAM HATHAWAY

STEVE BORTHWICK predicted the sky is the limit for his England team after a visit to see the Red Arrows.

Borthwick and his coaching staff visited the aerobatics display team at RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire before Christmas to talk teamwork, adaptability and organisation.

They sat in on a post-flight debrief with pilots headed by Squadron Leader Jon Bond, team leader and Red 1.

And Borthwick revealed the lessons learnt as England aim to get their Six Nations off to a flying start against Wales on 7 February.

The head coach said: "The lead pilot talked about what he wants from his team members and how much time he spent talking.

"He talked us through the selection procedure of Red Arrows pilots and he basically said every one is a great pilot, but what were going to select on is the character of these people.

"I thought how great that is and how consistent that is with what we do. We want tremendous characters in our team, and I feel

Red Arrows lesson inspires Borthwick to put on display

right now we have that and hard workers as people who are diligent and who want to get better.

"They were so to the point about what they must do better. Recognising what they did well but so clear about what they need to improve and the environment that was created to provide critical feedback to get better.

"I was really impressed by that. The pilots taking on the points of people, the number of experienced people they had in the room, talking about sharing their learnings, that was impressive.

"We were very grateful that they allowed us in for a day to sit through their briefing and their debriefing, how thorough they were, how meticulous they were on their objectives and rating themselves

on the training against their objectives."

Borthwick's side have won 11 on the spin since February last year, when they lost 27-22 to

Ireland in the Six Nations opener. In between they beat New Zealand, Australia and France but Borthwick insists there is still more in the tank with a World Cup looming next year.

He added: "We're nowhere near maxing out the potential. This team has the potential to be outstanding.

"We have players in there with huge amounts of talent, and whilst we're still reasonably low on experience at Test level, as they get used to Test rugby their growth is going to be enormous.

"I'm pleased how the players are embracing how we want to play, and taking the game on. I want them to attack this tournament, and come in with a mindset to play brave.

"The growth of this team is going to be so dependent on how hard we work and improve. I asked the players two weeks ago to come in ready, and I will ask them to embrace the physical and mental intensity that we're going to train at to take the team further on than where we are now."

ENGLAND SIX NATIONS SQUAD

Forwards: Chessum (Leicester), Clark (Gloucester), Coles (Northampton), Cowan-Dickie (Sale), Cunningham-South (Harlequins), T Curry (Sale), Dan (Saracens), Davison (Northampton), Earl (Saracens), Fisilau (Exeter), Genge (Bristol), George (Saracens), Hayes (Leicester), Itoje (Saracens), Iyogun (Northampton), Pepper (Bath), Pollock (Northampton), Rodd (Sale), Sela (Bath), Underhill (Bath).

Backs: Arundell (Bath), Atkinson (Gloucester), Daly (Saracens), Dingwall (Northampton), Feyi-Waboso (Exeter), Ford (Sale), Freeman (Northampton), Furbank (Northampton), Mitchell (Northampton), Murley (Harlequins), Ojomoh (Bath), Slade (Exeter), M Smith (Harlequins), Spencer (Bath), Steward (Leicester), Van Poortvliet (Leicester).

Rehabilitation in Girona: Baxter (Harlequins), B Curry (Sale), Lawrence (Bath), Roebuck (Sale), F Smith (Northampton).



SQUADRON LEADER

Borthwick sat in on Red Arrows briefings



MAKING A SPLASH
Bath's Sela is in England squad

GRAND PLAN FOR PARIS

FROM BACK PAGE

final stop - and Borthwick has told his side to stay in the hunt until that climax.

The head coach said: "We know the last seven Six Nations Championships have gone down to the last round of fixtures and we talked about that as a team. We want England

fans flooding across the Channel to Paris to come and watch the team in a massive encounter on the final round with the opportunity to achieve what we want.

"We also know that the only way you get there is by ensuring each of you take each step one at a

time." There were no major shocks in Borthwick's 36-man party.

Uncapped props Billy Sela, of Bath, and Emmanuel Iyogun, of Northampton, are in as cover for sidelined Will Stuart and Asher Opoku-Fordjour. Exeter's No.8 Greg Fisilau is also in.

BOURNEMOUTH v LIVERPOOL

Premier League: KO 5.30pm

BY IAN DOYLE

ARNE SLOT admits he will be "uneasy" if he has to bench Mo Salah again this season – but would feel the same about dropping any Liverpool player.

Salah returned for the Reds this week when playing the full 90 minutes of the Champions League win at Marseille on Wednesday, having been on Africa Cup of Nations duty.

It was the 33-year-old's first Liverpool start since late November, with an initial spell on the bench prompting a controversial outburst from Salah after being unused for the 3-3 draw at Leeds United in early December.

The forward claimed he was being made a scapegoat for the Reds' poor autumn form and had "no relationship" with Slot (below).

Salah was subsequently left out of the squad for the Champions League win at Inter Milan before playing the majority of the Premier League victory against Brighton after clear-the-air talks with Liverpool's head coach and having apologised to the squad.

And while Salah is likely to keep his place for today's clash at Bournemouth, Slot says it will not be straightforward should the time come to again bench the Egyptian.

"I always find it uneasy if I leave a player out, and even more a player that has meant a lot for this club," said the Reds boss.

"You can work with a player for a long time and you have had success with them, but part of my job is making the decision that I think is the best for the team.

"That is always an uneasy decision. Not only with Mo, but every single player I leave out, because of the work they all put in.

"Their quality is enough to play, so it is always uneasy not to play players."

Liverpool were unbeaten for the 12 games in which Salah was either benched or absent.

But when asked if the Kop legend now has a greater understanding of the possibility of again being rotated from the starting XI, Slot said: "Every player 99 out of 100 times is disagreeing with the manager if he doesn't play. It should be like that, because if you don't have confidence in yourself then it is hard to play in front of 60,000 people.

"These players should have confidence that, 'I am good enough to play and I should play'. I am not talking solely about Mo. It is hard for any player."

Ibrahima Konate is expected to remain on compassionate leave after the death of his father, so Joe Gomez is poised to stay on at centre-back alongside Virgil van Dijk.

Slot 'uneasy' about leaving out Mo again

'HE HAS MEANT A LOT FOR CLUB'

ROTATE A GREAT
Salah has found himself sidelined several times



Alex braced for Toth debut

ANDONI IRAOLA is ready to throw new Bournemouth signing Alex Toth in at the deep end tonight.

The 20-year-old midfielder (left) completed his £10.4million switch from Ferencvaros this week and seems likely to make his debut against Liverpool in the tea-time kick-off. Cherries head coach Iraola

said: "He's definitely available. It's probably not a situation where we will allow him a little bit more time to train, to explain more things.

"In the situation we found ourselves right now, he has to be ready, because we will definitely need him. I feel he has come here with the hunger to show his level."



ROBERTSON SPURRED ON GREAT BLOW

FROM BACK PAGE

World Cup this summer. That sense of urgency is a good fit for Spurs as they now bid to strengthen Thomas Frank's squad in a hurry.

Robertson slipped down the pecking order at Anfield after the signing of Milos Kerkez (right) last June.

Expanding on his future last month, he added: "I've got five months left and we need to see what the option is to stay or if there's options to go. After a stressful summer, I'm trying

to enjoy being a part of it, being a Liverpool player. I wanted to qualify for the World Cup and thankfully, we've managed that."

Robertson joined in 2017 and has won two Premier League titles, a Champions League, FA Cup, two League Cups, the World Club Cup and the UEFA Super Cup.



BY JOE THOMAS

DAVID MOYES fears Jack Grealish may require surgery on his injured foot.

The 30-year-old (left) has been seen by a specialist due to a stress fracture, which came to light this week but had been causing him discomfort for a while.

Moyes was unable to hide his disappointment as he spoke publicly on the loss of one of his star players for the first time, with Grealish's World Cup dream now hanging in the balance.

The Everton boss said: "It's a real pity for the boy. He's been back at it, enjoying it and doing what he is good at."

Pep backs Guehi to help City 'fragility'



Man City v Wolves
Today, KO 3pm

BY SIMON BAJKOWSKI
PEP GUARDIOLA does not expect Marc Guehi to solve all of Manchester City's problems when he makes his debut against Wolves today.

But as far as the City boss is concerned, adding his quality is certainly a good place to start.

Having completed his £20million move from Crystal Palace this week, Guehi (above) is backed to come straight into a defence that has been missing Ruben Dias, Josko Gvardiol, John Stones and Matheus Nunes.

And Guardiola expects that he will slot right in to help a team that in the past week has lost the Manchester derby and then at Bodo/Glimt in the Champions League.

"The fragility, I know how it will be solved," said Guardiola. "It's not just one player but he [Guehi] is going to help us because the experience of Marc is exceptional.

"This season [we] have struggled for details and injuries. But fragility is not just about one player. I know what the solution is

to not have the fragility. The players know it."

And Guardiola claims he saw enough from his players on their trip to the Arctic Circle to believe that they are getting back to somewhere near their best and that they just have to trust in themselves.

"In Bodo we missed in the boxes the chances we had again and the long balls and duels we were not aggressive enough and lost the second balls because we do not have specific players in that position," said Guardiola.

"But in general I had the feeling that the team was there.

"For 15-20 minutes except one action we were really good, [then in] two minutes we conceded two goals."

Jorgen Strand Larsen is due to be involved for Wolves today despite a transfer bid from Leeds.

The offer did not meet Wolves' valuation, which is understood to be around £40million.

Head coach Rob Edwards said: "He'll be part of the squad.

"I'm seeing a player with a focus and a really good attitude."

Howe's calm over window shopping

Newcastle v A Villa
Tomorrow, 2pm

BY LEE RYDER

NEWCASTLE head coach Eddie Howe is trying to keep his head this month while others lose theirs.

The Magpies go into tomorrow's game against Aston Villa with no major signings, despite injuries being a big concern.

Profit and Sustainability Rules are stopping Howe (right) from bringing in more than one player.

Asked about his mood, as other Premier League sides spend freely, Howe said: "I am not panicking. That is the worst thing you can do in the transfer market – make rash decisions.

"We have our strategy. PSR is controlling what

we are able to do. It is very, very difficult so let's see what happens in the last few days."

Unai Emery wants his Aston Villa players to show up like they did in Europe this week as they prepare to head to the "horrible" experience of St James' Park.

Villa returned from Turkey with a superb win and clean sheet against Fenerbahce, and Emery said:

"Newcastle is always very difficult in their home. Historically in the last few years, it was horrible for us – really bad results.

"We need players performing like they did against Fenerbahce. We need players being ready and always being with the same mentality."



ARSENAL v MAN UNITED

Premier League: Tomorrow, KO 4.30pm, Sky

BY JOHN CROSS

IN A PARALLEL universe, Viktor Gyokeres and Benjamin Sesko could be on different sides at the Emirates tomorrow.

Manchester United striker Sesko was close to joining Arsenal after a painstaking pursuit.

And maybe United could be getting more out of Gyokeres, who has largely struggled to adapt since his £64m move to the Gunners.

They were two of the most eye-catching deals of the summer when the Premier League went on a huge splurge on strikers.

Arsenal finally ended their long pursuit to sign a top-class centre-forward and put all their money on Gyokeres from Sporting Lisbon after he plundered 97 goals in 102 games for the Portuguese club.

This marked a sharp turn for Arsenal, who had previously been chasing Sesko, the young Slovenian striker at RB Leipzig.

But the Sesko trail went cold for the Gunners after the arrival of new sporting director Andrea Berta in March 2025 as he almost immediately set his sights on Gyokeres.

The reasoning on the Swede over Sesko was that it was all about the here and now. Sesko, still only 22, was young, raw and a work in progress. Gyokeres is 27.

Arsenal wanted an oven-ready striker to score goals and get them over the line and win trophies straight away.

They actually came close to signing Sesko in the summer of 2024. They had strong dialogue with RB Leipzig. Sesko's agent had been courted and they were ready to press the button on a £45m-plus deal.

However, it was Sesko who wobbled because he was wary of having to share striker duties with Kai Havertz and Gabriel Jesus. He felt he would develop



FLIP THE Gyokeres v Sesko could have been different after sliding doors summer

more by staying one more year at Leipzig, while Arsenal still maintained regular contact through the 2024-25 season.

Even when sporting director Edu left, the club made regular visits to Germany, kept in touch with his family and agent and did all the things that a club pursuing a hot target do.

But that changed when Berta came in. The regular trips tailed off and it became obvious that Berta was championing Gyokeres.

When Arsenal moved on Gyokeres, both Leipzig and Sesko were left high and dry. The German club were banking on his exit.

Sporting were not happy with Arsenal and it soon became clear that they were pushing Gyokeres towards Old Trafford.

Gyokeres had played under then-United boss Ruben Amorim (inset) at Sporting, but the ex-Coventry star made it clear he was not interested in a reunion.

Meanwhile, Sesko rejected Newcastle and United ended up paying £74m for potential in him, with Arsenal spending £64m on Gyokeres. The United fanbase is

split on Sesko. Scouts still maintain that because of his age, athleticism and pace, he will come good and be a prolific centre-forward.

Arsenal fans have been supportive of Gyokeres, but, despite his super strike against Inter Milan in the Champions League in mid-week, he has struggled.

He does not look on the same technical level as his team-mates and he has not scored enough.

In August, Sesko and Gyokeres did not even share minutes on the pitch when Arsenal beat United 1-0.

Sesko was a 65th-minute substitute and Gyokeres was hooked after an hour.

You suspect they will have a point to prove if they do go head to head tomorrow as both Arsenal and United will be determined to show they ended up with the right striker.

WE'RE NEVER GUNNER KNOW
How Benjamin Sesko might have looked had Arsenal won the race for his signature

ETHAN'S A LOAN SHARK

BY SIMON CASS

MIKEL ARTETA has challenged Ethan Nwaneri to "swim with the sharks" after the Arsenal teenager completed a season-long loan move to Marseille.

The 18-year-old impressed for Arteta's injury-hit squad in a breakthrough campaign last year, scoring nine times across all competitions.

But he has found opportunities difficult to come by so far this term, with club captain Martin Odegaard and £60million summer arrival Eberechi Eze preferred in the No.10 role.

Arteta said: "The talented young players that we have need minutes, and Ethan wasn't getting enough. The

last thing we want to do is cut his development because he's such a talent.

"He lives and breathes football. That's his life."

As a player, Arteta spent a season on loan at Paris St-Germain when he was 18.

And the Spaniard added: "The first thing is excitement because you speak to the manager, he's very keen on you, and you're going to start a lot of

games. And that's all very good. But then you have to go, 'OK, now it's time to pack your bags, here are the flight tickets to Marseille'. And then there is the fear and the

insecurity of getting out of a place that has been really comfortable for him [Nwaneri].

"At the end you have to be thrown to the sharks in an incredible football atmosphere. That is going to make him so good."



NEW PLACE Nwaneri after French switch

PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	22	15	5	2	40	14	50
Man City	22	13	4	5	45	21	43
Aston Villa	22	13	4	5	33	25	43
Liverpool	22	10	6	6	33	29	36
Man Utd	22	9	8	5	38	32	35
Chelsea	22	9	7	6	36	24	34
Brentford	22	10	3	9	35	30	33
Newcastle	22	9	6	7	32	27	33
Sunderland	22	8	9	5	23	23	33
Everton	22	9	5	8	24	25	32
Fulham	22	9	4	9	30	31	31
Brighton	22	7	9	6	32	29	30
Crystal Palace	22	7	7	8	23	25	28
Tottenham	22	7	6	9	31	29	27
Bournemouth	22	3	5	14	23	42	14
Leeds	22	6	7	9	30	37	25
Nottm Forest	22	6	4	12	21	34	22
West Ham	22	4	5	13	24	44	17
Burnley	22	3	5	14	23	42	14
Wolves	22	1	5	16	15	41	8

SWITCHES



Casemiro will battle to the end

BY TYRONE MARSHALL
MICHAEL CARRICK revealed Casemiro is "desperate" to finish on a high at Manchester United after the midfielder confirmed he will leave the club at the end of this season.

United confirmed the Brazilian will depart when his contract expires in the summer, with the announcement made on Thursday to provide clarity on his future.

That allows Casemiro time to assess his options over his next move, but Carrick insists his commitment cannot be questioned.

Confirmation of his exit after four years at the club came just days after he produced an outstanding performance in the Manchester derby.

Casemiro again showed his passion for the club with some jubilant celebrations in the Old Trafford victory against Man City and he is likely to keep his place in the side for the trip to Arsenal tomorrow.

"I think the announcement for Case was for clarity, as much as anything. It was decided anyway before I arrived, so it's not just a knee-jerk kind of decision," Carrick said.

"The type of personality, the character that he is, I think it shows with his performance last week, where he is mentally and how much it means for him to be here and to finish this season strong."

While United might not be the force they once were, their victory against Manchester City, under Carrick, has not gone unnoticed. Arteta said: "We're going to try to be ourselves, be very dominant like we always want to be."

Arteta is relishing the prospect of a titanic clash against United, having grown up in Spain watching the likes of Patrick Vieira and Roy Keane do battle.

"You could see the tension and the rivalry and those individual battles that make the game really, really special," he said. "Two massive clubs that they've been fighting at the highest level for so many years, and we want to try to have the best possible game to win it."



NO DOUBT Carrick and Casemiro in training

got no doubt about him at all." Harry Maguire is also out of contract at the end of this season and, like Casemiro, delivered an excellent display in the derby last weekend, returning to the starting line-up after two months out with a thigh injury.

His future isn't yet sealed and Carrick confirmed talks will be taking place over the next couple of months.

"I think it's just coming into that time of the season in terms of contracts and decisions," he added.

"That will obviously be discussed in good time, and at the right time."

Carrick did suggest he would offer his thoughts on Maguire's future at least, with director of football Jason Wilcox set to take the lead on talks.

"I think the important thing for me is any decision I make or my staff make or the club make, it's not short term, it's not just to get through to the end of the season," he said.

"I've got responsibility for whatever happens next to be in a good place and moving forward."

"So, as time goes on, I'm sure I'll be part of it and we'll work our way through it."

Central defender Matthijs de Ligt could return to training in the next couple of weeks after taking longer than expected to overcome a back injury.

The Dutch ace has not featured since the end of November.

"He had a bit of setback before I arrived, only small but he was a little bit slower than we had liked," said interim boss Carrick.

"He's getting closer and hopefully in the next couple of weeks he will be back."

De Ligt and Joshua Zirkzee, who is also set to miss a couple more weeks, are now the only players absent at United.



MOVING Casemiro is facing a United exit

TRADING PLACES

Viktor Gyokeres could have worn the red of Manchester United this season

MIKEL'S FOCUS GROUP

FROM BACK PAGE

it. That's the only thing that we can control, and the rest is just things that don't add any value to us, and they can take the focus to the wrong place."

Arteta is relishing the prospect of a titanic clash against United, having grown up in Spain watching the likes of Patrick Vieira and Roy Keane do battle.

"You could see the tension and the rivalry and those individual battles that make the

POOLS GUIDE

(3pm unless stated)

TODAY

Premier League

2 AFC Bournemouth v Liverpool (5.30)
(Live on Sky Sports Main Event)
4 Burnley v Tottenham Hotspur
6 Fulham v Brighton
7 Manchester City v Wolves
9 West Ham v Sunderland (12.30)
(Live on TNT Sports 1)

Sky Bet Championship

10 Birmingham v Stoke
11 Blackburn v Watford
12 Bristol City v Sheff Wed
13 Hull v Swansea
14 Leicester v Oxford Utd
15 Middlesbrough v Preston (12.30) ...
16 Millwall v Charlton (12.30)
(Live on Sky Sports Football)

18 QPR v Wrexham
19 Sheff Utd v Ipswich

Sky Bet League One

20 Blackpool v Northampton
21 Bolton v Leyton Orient
22 Cardiff v Stockport County (12.30) ..
23 Doncaster v Wigan
24 Huddersfield v Bradford City (12.30)
25 Plymouth v Luton (12.30)
26 Port Vale v Exeter
27 Reading v Barnsley
28 Rotherham v AFC Wimbledon
29 Stevenage v Mansfield
30 Wycombe v Peterborough

Sky Bet League Two

31 Barnet v Oldham (12.30)
32 Barrow v Crawley Tn
33 Bromley v Swindon
34 Cambridge Utd v Tranmere
35 Cheltenham v Grimsby
36 Colchester v Fleetwood Tn
37 Harrogate Tn v Gillingham
38 MK Dons v Shrewsbury
39 Newport Co v Chesterfield
40 Notts County v Crewe (12.30)
41 Salford City v Bristol Rovers
42 Walsall v Accrington Stanley

William Hill Scottish Premiership

43 Aberdeen v Livingston
44 Dundee Utd v St Mirren
45 Falkirk v Hibernian
47 Motherwell v Kilmarnock

William Hill Scottish Championship

49 Airdrieonians v Ross County
Partick v Ayr
Raith v Queen's Park
St Johnstone v Dunfermline

William Hill Scottish League One

East Fife v Queen of South
Hamilton v Cove Rangers
Inverness CT v Alloa
Kelty Hearts v Stenhousemuir (5.30)
(Live on BBC Alba)

William Hill Scottish League Two

Montrose v Peterhead
Clyde v Spartans
Dumbarton v Elgin
East Kilbride v Stranraer
Edinburgh City v Annan Athletic
Forfar v Stirling

Enterprise National League

Aldershot v Carlisle OFF
Altrincham v Boreham Wood
Boston Utd v Southend
Brackley v Hartlepool
Eastleigh v FC Halifax
Gateshead v Wealdstone OFF
Morecambe v Solihull Moors
Rochdale v Truro City
Scunthorpe v Forest Green (5.30) ...
Tamworth v Sutton
Woking v Yeovil
York v Braintree Tn

Women's Super League

Chelsea v Arsenal (12.30)
(Live on BBC 1)

Women's Championship

Portsmouth v Birmingham (5.15).....

TOMORROW

Premier League

1 Arsenal v Manchester Utd (4.30)....
(Live on Sky Sports Main Event)
3 Brentford v Nottm Forest (2pm)
5 Crystal Palace v Chelsea (2pm)
(Live on Sky Sports Main Event)
8 Newcastle v Aston Villa (2pm)
(Live on Sky Sports Premier League)

Sky Bet Championship

17 Portsmouth v Southampton (12noon)

William Hill Scottish Premiership

46 Hearts v Celtic
(Live on Sky Sports Football)

Women's Super League

48 Rangers v Dundee
Aston Villa v Man Utd (11.55)
Leicester v West Ham (11.55)
Liverpool FC v Tottenham (11.55)....
London City v Man City (11.55)

(Live on Sky Sports Premier League)

Women's Championship

Charlton v Newcastle (2pm)
Crystal Palace v Durham (12noon) ..
Ipswich v Bristol City (2pm)
Nottm Forest v Sheff Utd (2pm)
Sunderland v Southampton (2pm) ...

MONDAY

Premier League

Everton v Leeds (8pm)
(Live on Sky Sports Main Event)

Sky Bet Championship

Norwich v Coventry (8pm)
(Live on Sky Sports Football)

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LE GRAND PLAN

STEVE BORTHWICK revealed his Six Nations squad then declared all roads lead to France and a tilt at winning the title for the first time in six years.

England have not won the tournament

BY ADAM HATHAWAY since 2020 and last landed a Grand Slam in 2016, in Paris, when Borthwick (left) was Eddie Jones' assistant.

England face Wales first up on February 7, while the Stade de France again provides the

TURN TO PAGE 76, COLUMN 4

NORRIE GOES DOWN FIGHTING

AUSTRALIAN OPEN: PAGE 75



SPURS IN HURRY TO KOP ANDY

BY CAMERON WINSTANLEY TOTTENHAM are working on a deal to sign Andy Robertson from Premier League rivals Liverpool this month.

Robertson, 31, is out of contract in the summer, and Spurs had been tracking the full-back to get him to sign on the dotted line as his deal expires.

However, they have now brought forward their plans for the Scotland star (above).

Last month Robertson stated that he's "a player who wants to play" - particularly with one eye on captaining Scotland at the

TURN TO PAGE 77, COLUMN 1



ARSENAL MANCHESTER UTD

TOMORROW KICK-OFF 4.30PM



BY TOM CANTON

ARSENAL manager Mikel Arteta insists no one has "more hunger" to win the Premier League title than him.

The Gunners take on Manchester United, led by Michael Carrick (below), at the Emirates tomorrow, looking to maintain their healthy lead at the top of the table.

Having extended their buffer to seven points, Arteta was asked how the belief the title is theirs to lose makes him feel.

"I don't think anybody has more motivation, more hunger, more desire for us to go all the way and win it," he said.

"But we know that the only way to do it is by focusing and being very present in the moment, doing everything that we have to do today, do it better tomorrow. That's

TURN TO P79, COLUMN 1



PREM TOP SIX

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	22	15	5	2	40	14	50
Man City	22	13	4	5	45	21	43
Aston Villa	22	13	4	5	33	25	43
Liverpool	22	10	6	6	33	29	36
Man Utd	22	9	8	5	38	32	35
Chelsea	22	9	7	6	36	24	34

HUNGER GAMES

Arteta's huge appetite for success

LEADER: Arteta is desperate to keep Gunners on track

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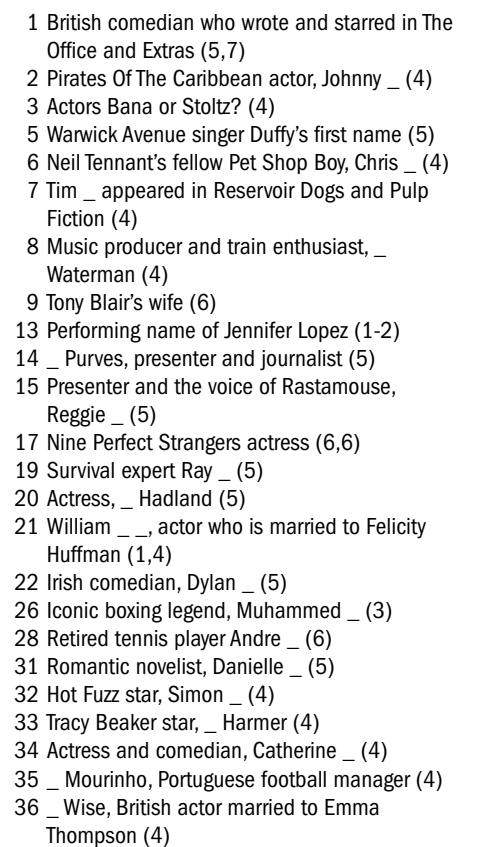
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ENTERTAINMENT CROSSWORD



CODEWORD

A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
J
K
L
M
N
O
P
Q
R
S
T
U
V
W
X
Y
Z

SAMURAI SUDOKU

Normal sudoku rules apply for all five 9x9 sudokus, but the 9x9 inner sudoku shares four of its 3x3 boxes with those of the outside sudokus.

[illegible]

EASY SUDOKU 1

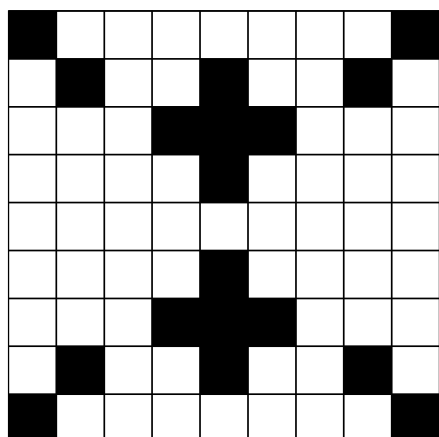
		7			4		1	
	9		8				5	6
	4			6	2			3
4	1		5					8
	3			1	8			
8		9			3	1	6	7
3			1	2			4	
9		1					7	2
	2		7		6	9		

HARD SUDOKU 1

6								
	2		5	3	6			
	5			1		9		
1	3		4					
		4		2		7		
					1		4	5
		3		6			1	
4			8	9	2		7	
								6

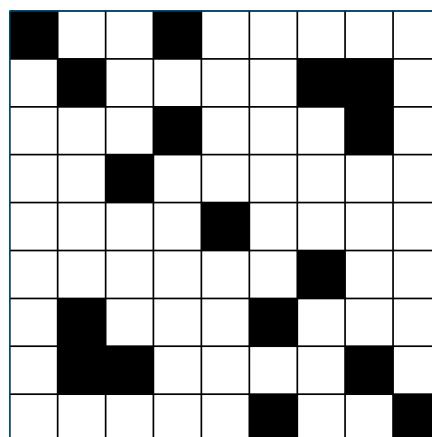
NUMBERFIT 1

Use logic to fit the listed numbers below into the corresponding grid.



2 digits: 19 51 54 57 59 75 79 97
3 digits: 414 577 775 779 818 977
4 digits: 4494 5594 8544 8955
5 digits: 74757 75547
7 digits: 4757474 4949154 5717974 5745575
9 digits: 751101175 759919579 795519975

NUMBERFIT 2



2 digits: 18 28 90 92
3 digits: 432 444 466 634 644 786 837 844
4 digits: 2438 3394 4043 4488 4943 6698 7943 8440
5 digits: 82355 89078
6 digits: 201336 233166 236126 281877
8 digits: 46942028 55968248

ALPHADOKU 1

A 9 x 9 sudoku with the letters R to Z.

			W	T				
	V		U	S				
	U		R					
		S				V	R	
R			X	W		Y	S	
							W	
	Y					U		
W	T	R					X	
				Z		R		V

EASY SUDOKU 2

7		8		3	1	6		
				8	6		7	
9		3				1		5
			6		3		2	1
2	9						3	7
5	3		7		9			
8		4				7		3
	7		3	4				
		9	1	6		4		8

HARD SUDOKU 2

9						6		5
			4		6			
				9	7			1
	6		3			8	1	
		9				5		
	8	5			1		6	
3			2	5				
			7		8			
7		4						3

ALPHADOKU 2

A 9 x 9 sudoku with the letters R to Z.

	Z			X		R	T	
				T				
		X	V	S		U		
T		R			U	W		
		V						
		U						Y
	V	S					Z	
X								
				U	Y	S		V

FUTOSHIKI 1

Insert the numbers one to five in each row and each column, making sure that no number is repeated.
The only symbols to guide you are the "greater than" (>) and "less than" (<) signs.

			2	

FUTOSHIKI 2

KILLER SUDOKU 1

Each row and column hold the numbers 1 to 9 and the numbers in the cages must add to the given total.
No number can be repeated in a cage.

21				20		13		15
	9			3			16	6
14	9				12			14
	14			18	7		9	
16				9	11		14	
			13			7		
9	9			15		7		10
	14	16	18		15		12	
						10		

KILLER SUDOKU 2

14	11	11	5		5		16	
			14		14	12		
8		10				9	7	
12		25		6			19	
13					9	9	16	
12	15		8					
		9		21	12		14	
3		8				16		12
10		11		9				

KAKURO 1

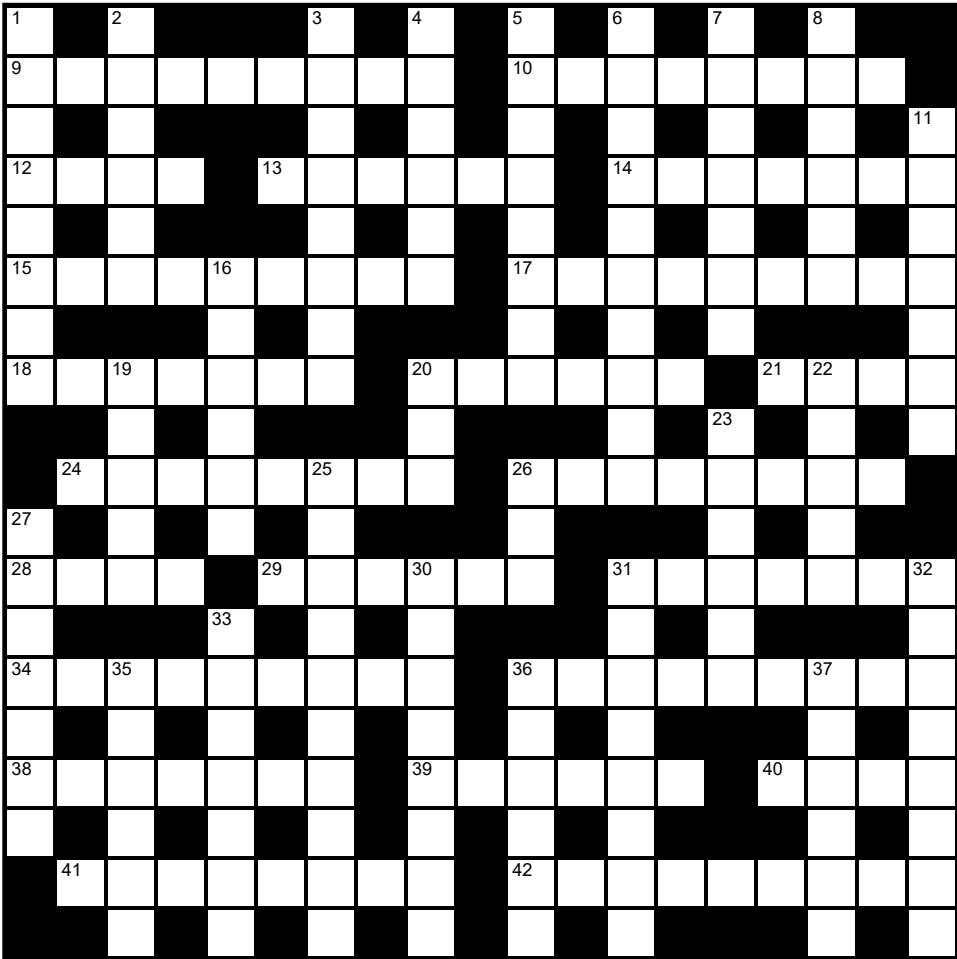
Fill in each series of blank squares using the numbers 1 to 9. Each series – across and down – must add up to the number in the shaded box at the beginning or top of the series. A number may be repeated in each line but not in a series.

11	15	11				34	5	
19				25		7	8	
19					14			
		16			13			
		16	15		21	16		17
		30				15		
		11		13			11	
9					10			
4			6	22			19	
21					11			10
	27				15		14	
					10	9		
			32					
			11					

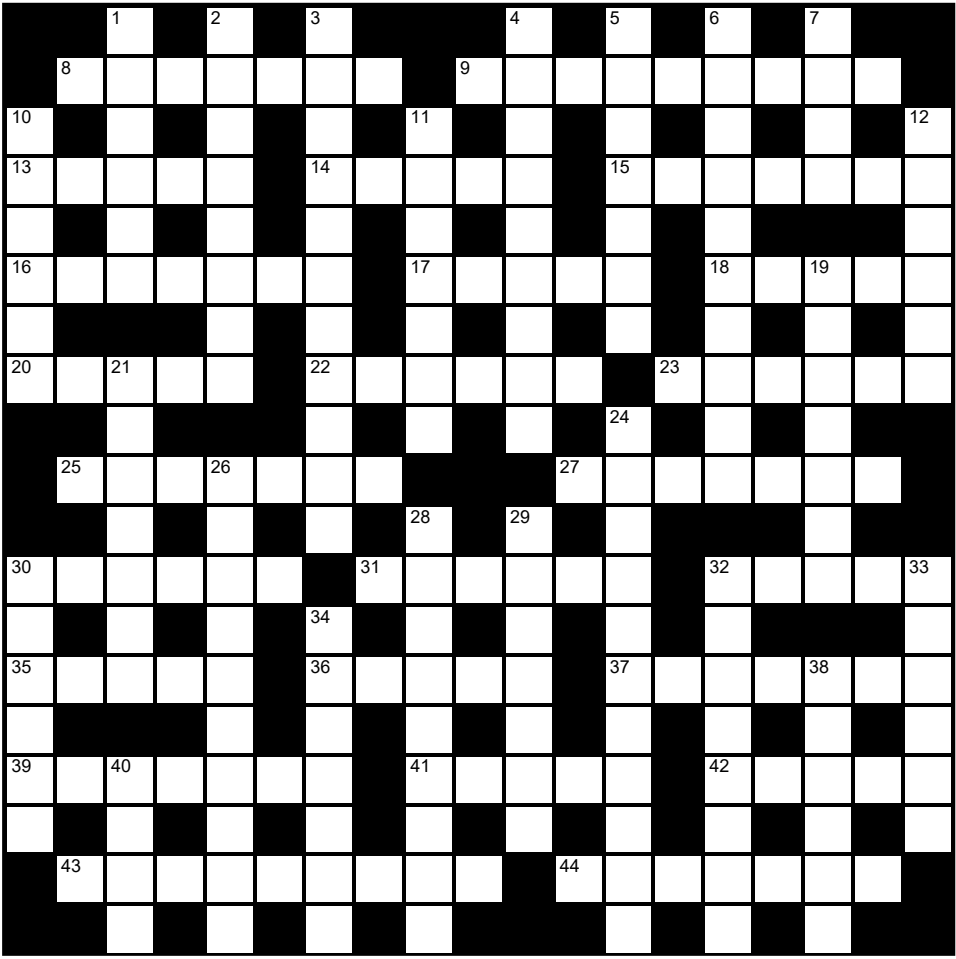
KAKURO 2

6	8	19				27	15	
17				30		16		
17					21			
		12			17			
			16			6		8
		31	4			19		
		34						
		3			11			
4							6	
10				16	11			21
17					13			7
	18					9	11	
				27				
				24				

BIG CROSSWORD 1



BIG CROSSWORD 2



ACROSS

- 9 Exasperation (9)
- 10 Killer (8)
- 12 Pavement edge (4)
- 13 Riches (6)
- 14 Planet (7)
- 15 Improvised (9)
- 17 Take the place of (9)
- 18 Atomic (7)
- 20 Gloomy (6)
- 21 Self-satisfied (4)
- 24 Cooking utensil (8)
- 26 Attire (8)
- 28 Notion (4)
- 29 A dozen (6)
- 31 Portentous (7)
- 34 Favoured (9)
- 36 Lie (9)
- 38 Twister (7)

DOWN

- 1 Crack shot (8)
- 2 Warm jacket (6)
- 3 Lower (8)
- 4 Piece of small shot (6)
- 5 Stress (8)
- 6 Musical instrument (5,5)
- 7 Panther (7)
- 8 Bewilder (6)
- 11 Retaliation (7)
- 16 Stink (6)
- 19 Fad (5)
- 20 Noise (3)
- 22 Fruit (5)

- 23 Flourish (6)
- 25 Electrical socket (5,5)
- 26 Snooker stick (3)
- 27 Debate (7)
- 30 Beetle (8)
- 31 U.S. state (8)
- 32 Disappointed (8)
- 33 Six-sided figure (7)
- 35 Adorn (6)
- 36 Defective (6)
- 37 Public speaker (6)

ACROSS

- 8 Not very (4,3)
- 9 Butter substitute (9)
- 13 Work out (5)
- 14 Sound (5)
- 15 Concentrated (7)
- 16 Branch of maths (7)
- 17 Face make-up (5)
- 18 Respond (5)
- 20 One with leprosy (5)
- 22 Essential character (6)
- 23 Small (6)
- 25 Drinking glass (7)
- 27 Colouring sticks (7)
- 30 Relegate (6)
- 31 Lowest point (6)
- 32 Pamphlet (5)
- 35 Glossy fabric (5)
- 36 Garret (5)

DOWN

- 1 Sharp bend (6)
- 2 Twelfth month (8)
- 3 Writing implement (8,3)
- 4 Defend, protect (9)
- 5 Catches fire (7)
- 6 Brotherhood (10)
- 7 Soon (4)
- 10 Attack violently (6)
- 11 Shake (7)
- 12 Mild (6)
- 19 Feeler (7)

- 21 Plunge (7)
- 24 Plan before hand (11)
- 26 Plastic bullet (5,5)
- 28 A bruise (9)
- 29 Adhesive label (7)
- 30 Cleaning cloth (6)
- 32 Tight-lipped (8)
- 33 Bicycle for two (6)
- 34 Kneecap (7)
- 38 Rich cake (6)
- 40 Suffering (4)

TWO-SPEED CROSSWORD

This two-speed crossword has two sets of clues, but just one grid

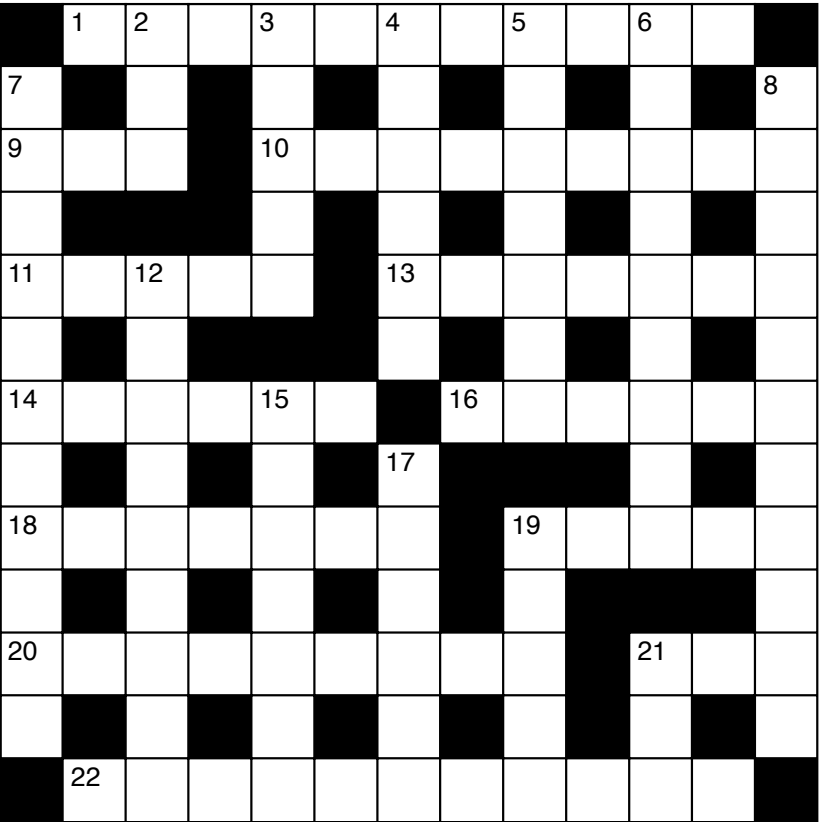
CRYPTIC CLUES

ACROSS

- 1. The seance was successful, apparently, without going to extremes (5,6)
- 9. Sailor goes back to desert (3)
- 10. Observe the dissertation of writing medium (9)
- 11. Horrify father, taken aback by his friend (5)
- 13. See the old boy start the rally (7)
- 14. Usual Roman disorder at 50 (6)
- 16. Seize part of what James Watt achieved (6)
- 18. The archbishop is obviously an animal of the highest order (7)
- 19. The dean's chair (5)
- 20. Get rid of menial tie (9)
- 21. Take Susan a-courting? (3)
- 22. The enterprise apparently is lacking revenue (11)

DOWN

- 2. Result of Bill doing something, perhaps? (3)
- 3. Team of experts emerge from wrecked plane (5)
- 4. Proposal to end the standstill? (6)
- 5. Precipitate down payment (7)
- 6. Worker on a higher level has the advantage (5,4)
- 7. Relation of how big, backward writer got chop (5-6)
- 8. One doesn't need to offer him a penny for his thoughts (11)
- 12. Having no pride, it leads to utter ruin (9)
- 15. Greed is a besetting sin, and includes hard-heartedness (7)
- 17. Make an exit in semi-nude role (6)
- 19. Look for about fifty who are smooth (5)
- 21. There's wickedness in transgressing (3)



QUICK CLUES

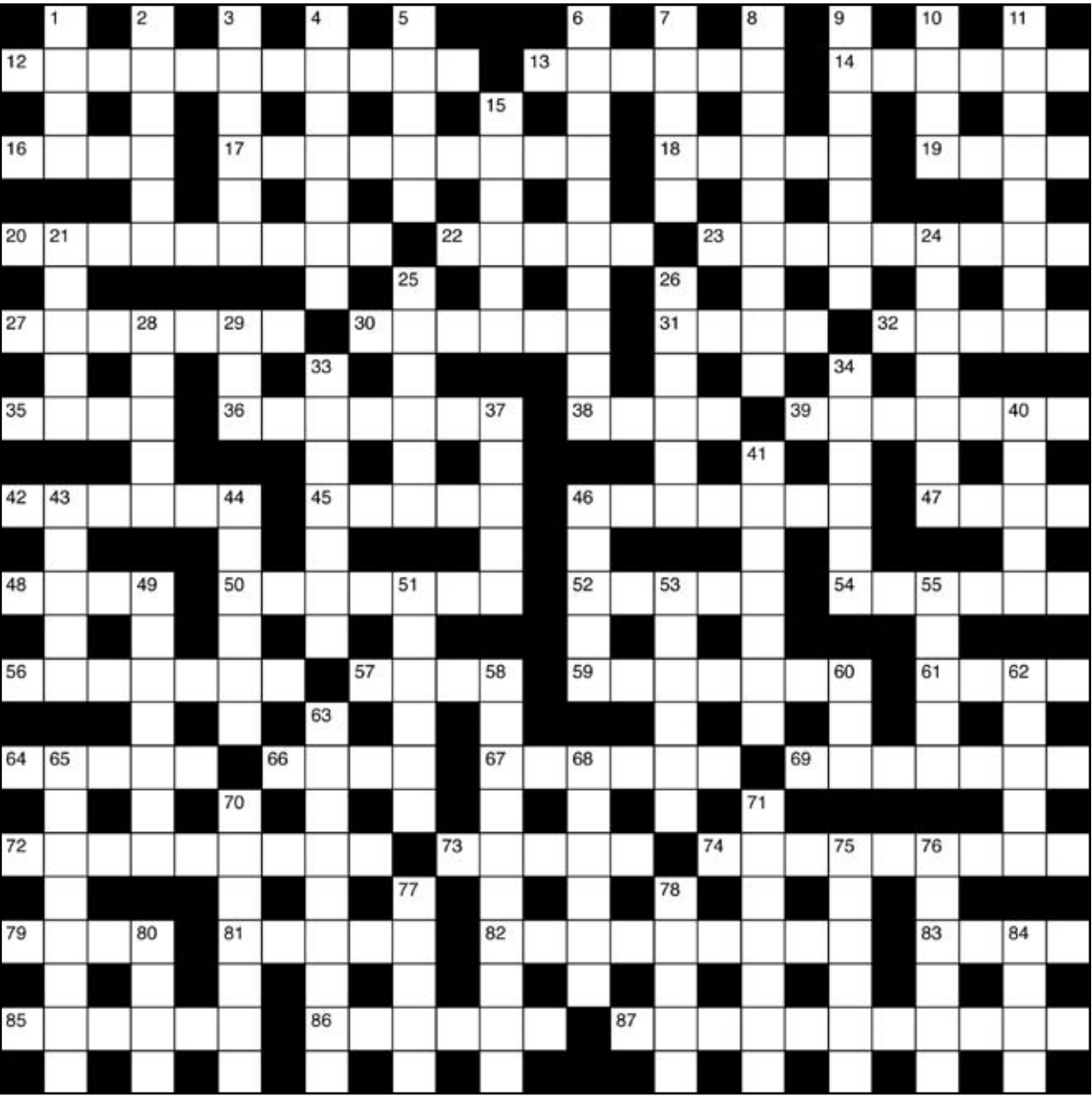
ACROSS

- 1. Prudent course (5,6)
- 9. Rodent (3)
- 10. Stationery item (9)
- 11. Shock (5)
- 13. Perceive (7)
- 14. Regular (6)
- 16. Connect (6)
- 18. Ape (7)
- 19. French town (5)
- 20. Remove (9)
- 21. Prosecute (3)
- 22. Venture (11)

DOWN

- 2. Deed (3)
- 3. Wall section (5)
- 4. Movement (6)
- 5. Place (7)
- 6. Position of control (5,4)
- 7. Relative (5-6)
- 8. Independently-minded person (11)
- 12. Spiritual ruin (9)
- 15. Cupidity (7)
- 17. Leave (6)
- 19. Polished (5)
- 21. Transgression (3)

JUMBO CROSSWORD



- ACROSS
12. Misery (4,2,5)

13. Yield (4,2)

14. Lunatic (6)

16. Idea (4)

17. Instant (9)

18. Mark (5)

19. Way (4)

20. Continued (4,5)

22. Wait on (5)

23. Drawing (9)

27. Pooh! (3,4)

30. Deduce (6)

31. Strong flavour (4)

32. Kills (5)

35. Vegetable (4)

36. Increases (5,2)

38. Discard (4)

39. Quickly (7)

42. State (6)

45. Appointment (5)

46. Nothing (4,3)

47. Post (4)

48. Maintain (4)

50. Information (3-4)

52. Animal (5)

54. Maiden (6)

56. Handled (7)

57. Peek (4)

59. Rise (5,2)

61. Fame (4)

64. Demure (5)

66. Lug (4)

67. Communication (6)

69. Feathers (7)

72. Hang on! (4,1,4)

73. Firearm (5)

74. Spontaneous (9)

79. Dog (4)

81. Deposit (5)

82. Rotates (4,5)

83. Relaxation (4)

85. Burning (2,4)

86. Work (6)

87. Don't worry (4,7)

- DOWN
1. Healthy (4)

2. Ricochet (6)

3. Fragment (6)

4. Great (7)

5. Amount wagered (5)

6. Doubts (10)

7. Stop (5)

8. Reliable (9)

9. Changed (7)

10. Cut (4)

11. Deliberately (8)

15. Various (6)

21. Green (5)

24. Recovers (7)

25. Meagre (6)

26. Brook (6)

28. Stupid (5)

29. Donkey (3)

33. Gives (7)

34. White (6)

37. Affected (3,2)

40. Jousting weapon (5)

41. Songs (7)

43. Utter (5)

44. Rang (6)

46. Bobs (5)

49. Musician (7)

51. Nervous (2,4)

53. Complained (6)

55. Note (5)

58. Leaving (7,3)

60. Chum (3)

62. Stingy (5)

63. Large reptile (9)

65. Poignant (8)

68. Bigger (6)

70. Played for time (7)

71. Sums (7)

75. Plant (6)

76. Whisper (6)

77. Horse race (5)

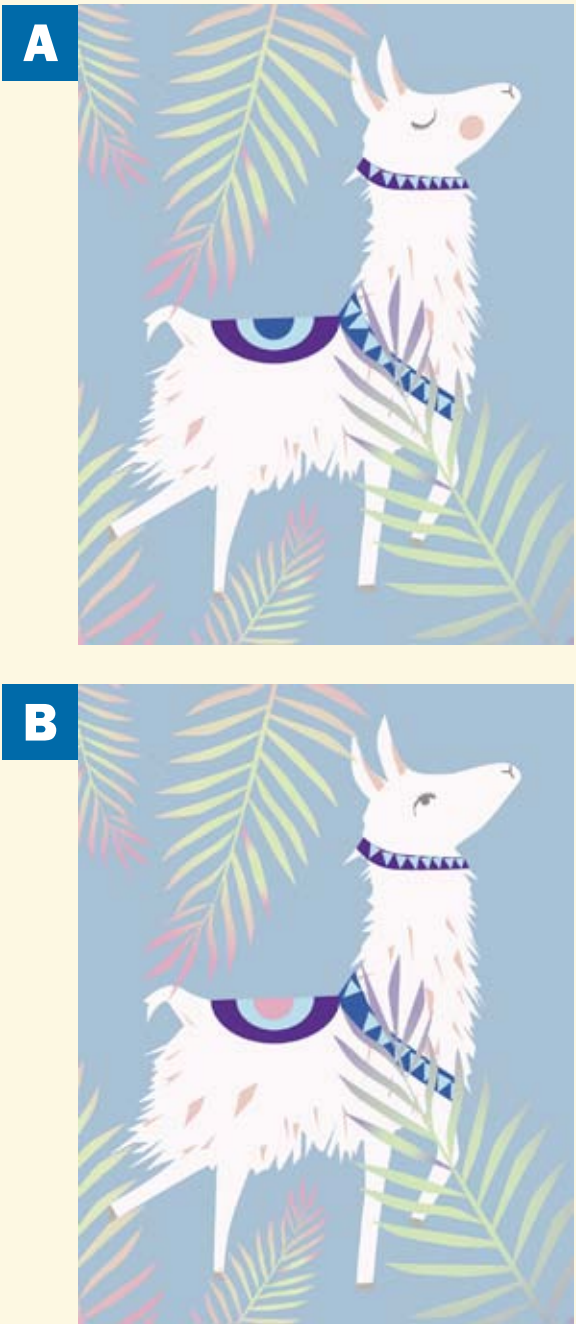
78. Attempts (5)

80. Flog (4)

84. Hotpot (4)

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you spot the six differences between these two pictures?



NUMBERCRUNCH

Follow the instructions from left to right, starting with the number given to reach an answer at the end of the row

BEGINNER	51	-46	x8	-26	x3	+16	50% of this	-13	3/4 of this	ANSWER
INTERMEDIATE	266	5/7 of this	-46	Take the square root	+276	5/6 of this	-75	40% of this	+269	ANSWER
ADVANCED	388	Increase by 25%	+43	7/12 of this	-74	8/9 of this	+262	9/10 of this	-76	ANSWER

GIANT SUDOKU

Every row, every column and every 5 x 5 box must contain every digit from 1 to 9 and every letter from K to Z.

7		O		L	T		9		X					Q					V					R
P			Z		V	Y		Q	8						S	N				W				3
	2	5							1	3	7					R		M		Q				6
		N						3	U	9								1		V				
U		M					6		R		W				1	5	2		4		T	Z	9	X
			X		O				Y		N	5	P	R	3								T	
				M	X	6	W	2				8		Z	Q	1	V				5		O	
	6					4				T			V		N	W								
	Y		O			9	5	M			U		K	2			S	T					P	N
	4		5	Z			T			L		1	X	9		O	P					7		
1	9					T	P		Q			V			O	3	4	8		5			6	Y
	5	6		X			S		V			T			9					W	P			1
			7	Y	R		X			O					U	Z	1	6	L					T
V	N	L					Z	3	U		K		2	Y	X				R		9			Q
	T	Q		P			4				3	L					7			U				
W					2	U		S		K	Q		7				O	Y						X
O		S	Q				K				3	9	1	U	T	8		W		6				
		1			W	M				5	V		Z		4	9	L				3	8		7
T		U	Y					9		8		M	X	6		3			V					Z
	7	9	8	4	L		1				Y		T	M		Z			N					
	K					Y		O	7	S	P		L		R									5
4			R		1						6	3			N		X		Z		V			
	L	8			4			V	6		2				Z	Q	W					M		
		T		V	K		5		9	Y		W	N			U	L			8			Q	
	Q		6		N	M	9	L	X			8				7		Y		S		2	R	

MEDIUM SUDOKU 1

		3			4		7	
	2	9		8			6	
5	4							3
4				6			9	2
	9		2		7		5	
	7			3	9			4
3							8	2
		7		2		1		
	6		1			7	4	

VERY HARD SUDOKU 1

2			9		8			4
	7						2	
		5				8		
5			2		6			7
	2			1			3	
9			7		4			5
		4				7		
	9						6	
6			4		7			2

CROSS OUT 1

Cross out one of the two letters in each divided square to reveal a completed crossword grid.

S	H	O	R	K
C	N	U	C	T
L		S		E
O		I		H
S	A	L	C	S
T	I	U	K	E
W		E		Z
T		A		P
T	A	R	U	S
S	I	L	E	R

CROSS OUT 2

B	E	L	L	E
S	A	R	H	S
T		O		X
F		E		H
A	A	A	N	E
D	W	U	R	T
J		T		Q
L		R		D
B	A	S	G	S
L	U	N	B	D

IMPOSSUDOKU 1

7		1		2			
	8		4	9			
	3		1				
		6	7			2	
	1	7				8	3
	4			5	7		
				7		8	
				2	4	1	
			6			3	7

MEDIUM SUDOKU 2

9		7	5			3		
			9				5	
5		6	4		2	8		
	6		2			7		4
				3				
2			6				8	1
		9	8		5	1		3
	5				1			
		4		2	9	5		6

VERY HARD SUDOKU 2

2								7
6								2
		7	3		4	8		
		2	4		7	9		
			2		1			
		4	5		8	2		
		6	7		5	4		
3								6
4								8

IMPOSSUDOKU 2

5		1		8	9			
				2			9	
2		8				1		
					2			6
6	8						1	4
1			3					
		9				3		7
	4			7				
			8	5		9		2

PATHFINDER 1

From the top corner, make a path of words linked to the theme. The trail goes through each letter once but never diagonally.

Parts of a sailing ship

A	R	B	M	B	O	P	R	E	M	T	G	A	L	L
N	O	E	O	O	W	S	I	R	A	S	R	A	Y	E
C	H	A	M	B	C	E	T	O	L	T	D	H	L	Y
T	A	E	S	P	A	L	C	F	E	S	L	E	A	H
C	R	L	T	A	N	B	A	E	C	A	M	I	L	M
W	O	C	N	I	C	F	O	R	L	U	H	A	Z	I
S	S	T	F	A	H	R	E	D	L	K	N	S	Z	E
N	E	G	I	H	E	F	E	N	E	E	I	A	M	N
R	E	U	R	E	A	D	R	E	L	M	A	S	T	H
N	T	S	P	S	T	E	D	T	R	E	D	T	R	O
T	I	R	A	O	U	E	E	C	A	R	D	P	O	L
L	L	H	E	H	S	H	S	K	U	Q	U	R	P	E
E	R	W	E	L	E	W	Y	R	I	G	N	G	O	O
R	A	A	Y	A	L	I	E	U	P	G	I	K	C	P
M	D	R	S	S	D	N	L	L	W	O	R	P	E	D

TV period dramas

A	R	Y	G	E	O	N	O	L	F	L	L	R	I	A
V	E	E	D	R	T	B	W	T	H	A	Y	O	T	C
L	G	N	I	R	L	E	E	A	S	U	O	G	V	I
I	S	A	L	B	G	R	R	I	F	O	U	N	N	W
S	H	D	L	L	A	A	G	V	E	M	E	H	T	O
C	A	N	T	H	C	V	E	H	T	A	F	E	C	R
W	D	I	M	E	A	I	E	S	A	U	C	H	T	S
I	F	E	R	N	O	U	C	I	N	B	C	A	N	R
D	E	V	L	E	M	T	L	D	D	E	H	T	E	E
O	L	O	I	T	O	W	A	U	I	T	O	N	R	P
W	S	Y	E	T	L	E	N	J	E	R	N	A	I	K
N	T	R	L	D	A	L	D	E	R	P	D	E	D	R
N	O	E	T	Y	C	K	C	A	P	E	N	D	D	A
A	E	Y	T	A	H	E	M	J	K	A	I	E	L	O
B	B	G	E	N	T	L	A	N	Y	B	L	R	S	P

WORDSEARCH 1

Find 13 words in the left and 11 words in the right grid.

Words that follow 'Horse'

T	O	P	E	R	A	C	G	N	L
N	U	D	X	Z	F	N	P	X	A
R	E	N	M	E	Q	W	O	U	U
A	S	D	T	A	D	F	W	R	G
D	N	N	Y	S	N	X	E	W	H
I	E	U	B	V	E	S	R	H	Y
S	S	O	O	V	E	H	H	A	A
H	Z	R	G	H	N	O	C	I	L
G	U	A	R	D	D	I	H	R	P
B	G	N	I	D	A	R	T	S	Q

Family games

F	O	D	E	U	L	C	N	Y	Q
Y	L	O	P	O	N	O	M	M	N
F	S	N	D	J	S	R	K	O	B
K	W	U	X	N	C	E	I	U	U
A	L	Z	D	M	R	T	T	S	C
N	G	O	L	P	A	S	C	E	K
U	F	N	L	R	B	I	I	T	A
L	N	U	E	G	B	W	T	R	R
I	N	P	H	J	L	T	D	A	O
K	O	X	Z	G	E	D	S	P	O

ARROWWORD 1

Conical felt hat Punish		Cooling device Harmful		Soy-flavoured soup Departed		Prison room	
↓		↓		↓			
←							
Areas	→					Entire	
Believer in God		Jazz singer, Fitzgerald		Birds Tread	→		
↓		↓		↓			
				Spider's creation		Decrepit	
Auction item	→			Seek the affection of	→		
Woodland flower	↓						
↓							
Serpent	→			Item of furniture	→		

ARROWWORD 2

Paused		Period of history (5.3) Dove's call		Grow older		Fitting Donkey	
↓		↓		↓		↓	
Part of a play	→			Space Small ocean	→		
Least tight Make amends	→			↓			
↓						Devastate	Word-smith
↓						↓	↓
Killer whale		Hearing organ	→			Seasonal illness	
↓						↓	
				Spaceship (abbr.)	→		
↓							
Rim		Cunning	→				
↓							
				Edible kernel	→		

Fever Pitch

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YOUR FOOTBALL WEEKEND

STARTS HERE

Frank must earn his Spurs

SHERWOOD TELLS THOMAS HE NEEDS TO PLAY THE TOTTENHAM WAY - P2-3



SING WHEN WINNING

Spurs beat Dortmund (below) in midweek but Tim Sherwood says victories will not be enough for fans if Thomas Frank cannot turn on the style



COLE WON'T GIVE BLUES COLD SHOULDER SAYS ROSENIOR - PAGE 4

BRENTFORD v NOTTINGHAM FOREST

Premier League: Tomorrow, KO 2pm

ANDREWS:
WE HAVE
HIT BACK



BRENTFORD boss Keith Andrews feels the players have come a long way since a "tough day" when his first match in the Premier League ended with defeat at Nottingham Forest.

The Bees were brushed aside 3-1 at the City Ground in August, but otherwise it has largely been a positive first campaign for Andrews since he replaced long-serving boss Thomas Frank.

An unbeaten six-game run in the league ended in defeat at Chelsea last weekend, but Andrews' side still find themselves very much in the shake up for the European places.

Brentford host Forest - now with Sean Dyche as the club's third manager of the season - in the return fixture tomorrow and Andrews is focused on his side continuing their upward trajectory.

"It was certainly a tough day for us all, but it is pretty obvious to see the development that we have

made in the months since that, and I am delighted with the progress we have made," Andrews (above) said. "We have gone day-to-day, week-to-week, and game-to-game to build a team, a squad, a way of playing and a way of working.

"From that, we have obviously got results and have managed to grow and develop as a group, which has been nice to see.

"It is nice to see players flourish and grow in confidence."

Forest have signed Italian striker Lorenzo Lucca from Napoli in time for Sunday's trip to Brentford.

Lucca only joined Antonio Conte's side in the summer but did not have a great impact and has been allowed to join Forest, who hold an option to turn the deal into a permanent one.

Boss Dyche said: "The club has a trading way, we let one out and we need to get one in."

FULHAM v BRIGHTON

Premier League: KO 3pm

HE COULD
KOST DAN
HIS PLACE



DANNY WELBECK remains Brighton's first-choice frontman but Seagulls boss Fabian Hurrzeler admitted Charalampos Kostoulas is pushing for a starting berth.

Kostoulas (above) was introduced in the final quarter of an hour from the bench in place of Welbeck on Monday and the teenager produced a stunning overhead kick to help Brighton to a 1-1 draw against Bournemouth.

All but two of the 18-year-old's appearances this season have been as a substitute and that looks set to continue at Fulham today, but Hurrzeler is happy to have the young Greek as an alternative.

"We all know his big potential and he can really change the game for us," Hurrzeler said. "He's still a young player and he's still in a phase where he needs to develop and we try to help him. He's definitely pushing (to start) by performance.

It's helpful to have good back-up like him for Danny."

Hurrzeler admitted Diego Coppola could leave Brighton on loan during the transfer window to boost the defender's hopes of being selected for Italy at this summer's World Cup - if they qualify.

"It's a 50-50 situation," said Hurrzeler, who will welcome back Maxim De Cuyper at Craven Cottage after illness. "Copps might be one player but we really enjoy working with him."

Fulham boss Marco Silva knows Harry Wilson's impressive form will only earn him more admirers, but laughed off claims the winger's future is linked to his own.

Both Silva and Wilson will be out of contract this summer and this week reports suggested Wales international Wilson has put talks about a new deal on hold until clarity is reached over Silva's future.



Winger's firmly
making a Marc

MARCUS EDWARDS has been backed to use his first goal of the season last weekend as a springboard in Burnley's bid to beat the drop.

The 27-year-old winger has had limited opportunities to make an impression since his permanent arrival last summer, only starting his first Premier League game of this season post-Christmas.

Edwards (above), though, is making a case for greater involvement and scored the leveller in a 1-1 draw at Liverpool, which left Burnley 19th in the table, eight points off retaining their top-flight spot.

Edwards will be hoping to keep his spot in the starting XI against former club Tottenham today, and Clarets boss Scott Parker expressed his delight at the wide man seizing his chance.

"He has a spring in his step, he has been superb since he came into the team," Parker said.

"He's been given his opportunity and for sure he's grabbed it. He's brought an added dimension into that.

"I was really pleased with him at the weekend, scoring his goal, and just his general performance all-round since he's come back into the team. I'm really pleased for him and long may that continue."

You can Tel it's
way too much!

BY ALASDAIR GOLD

THOMAS FRANK has called on UEFA to change their Champions League rules to stop players from being overused.

Those who have been injured for 60 days can be replaced until they are fit again and Spurs had brought in Mathys Tel for Dominic Solanke for the win against Slavia Prague last month.

However, with Solanke (below) returning, Frank had to inform Tel that he was back out of the squad ahead of the midweek win against Borussia Dortmund.

"Of course he was disappointed," said Frank. "I completely understand him. He's disappointed but he's been very professional. He's a strong character."

The Tottenham boss believes that the expanded European competitions, with eight matches in the league phase, have not been matched by updated rules as players are pushed beyond the limit by the amount of games they have to play.



TOUGH GOING

Frank has been under the cosh as his Spurs team have struggled

PREMIER TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	22	15	5	2	40	14	50
Man City	22	13	4	5	45	21	43
Aston Villa	22	13	4	5	33	25	43
Liverpool	22	10	6	6	33	29	36
Man Utd	22	9	8	5	38	32	35
Chelsea	22	9	7	6	36	24	34
Brentford	22	10	3	9	35	30	33
Newcastle	22	9	6	7	32	27	33
Sunderland	22	8	9	5	23	23	33
Everton	22	9	5	8	24	25	32
Fulham	22	9	4	9	30	31	31
Brighton	22	7	9	6	32	29	30
Crystal Palace	22	7	7	8	23	25	28
Tottenham	22	7	6	9	31	29	27
Bournemouth	22	6	9	7	35	41	27
Leeds	22	6	7	9	30	37	25
Nottm Forest	22	6	4	12	21	34	22
West Ham	22	4	5	13	24	44	17
Burnley	22	3	5	14	23	42	14
Wolves	22	1	5	16	15	41	8

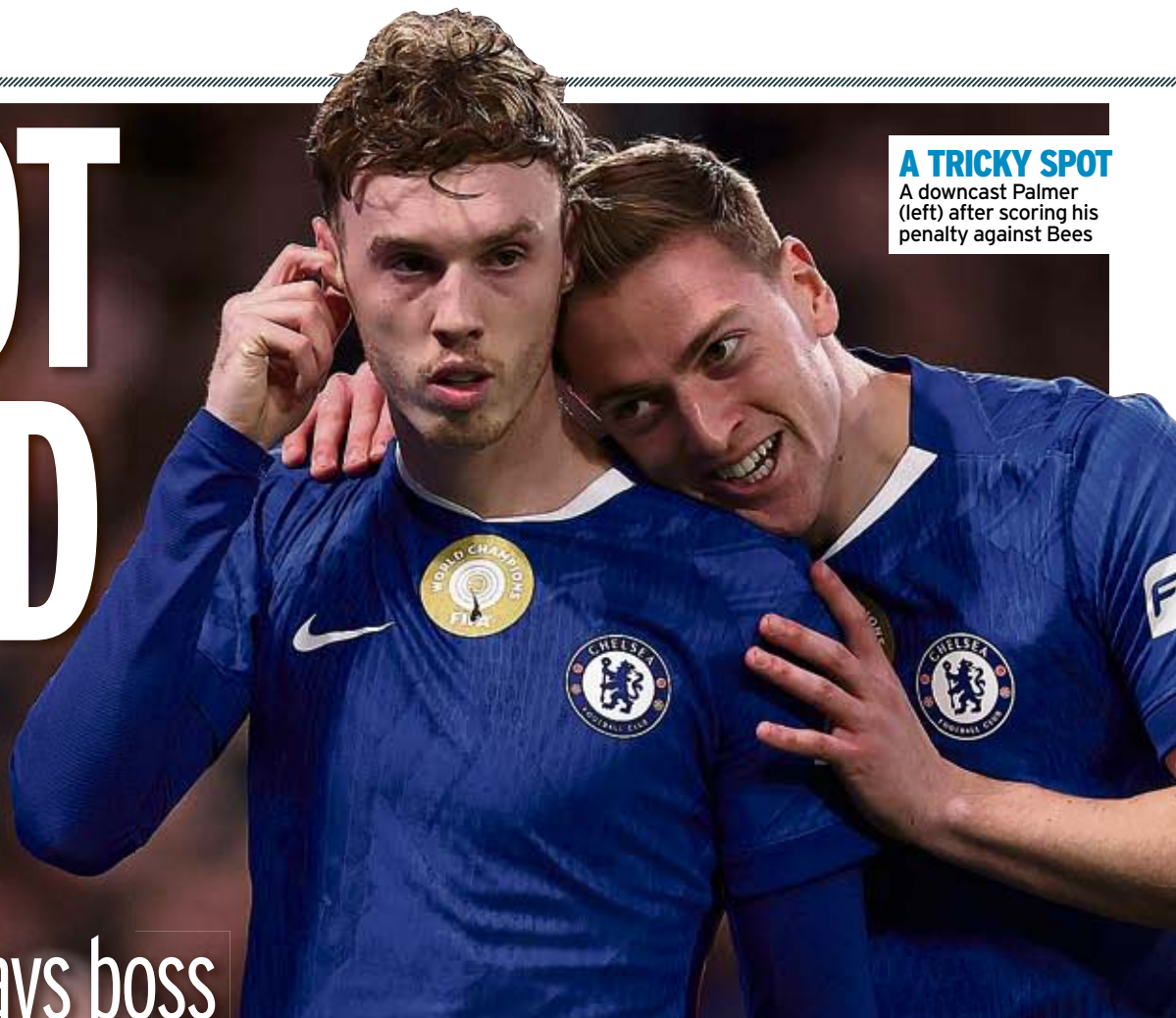


ROM RAIDER...

Cristian Romero gets his celebration started after opener in Europe

COLE'S NOT GONE COLD ON BLUES

Star's reaction down to pain, says boss



A TRICKY SPOT
A downcast Palmer (left) after scoring his penalty against Bees

CRYSTAL PALACE v CHELSEA

Premier League: KO 2pm tomorrow

BY **BOBBY VINCENT**

LIAM ROSENIOR has insisted Cole Palmer is "very, very happy" at Chelsea despite rumours linking him with a move to Manchester United.

There has been speculation over the past few days that the 23-year-old, who has been at the Blues since joining from Manchester City in 2023, is feeling unsettled and homesick down in the south.

Palmer has played only 13 times this season in all competitions due to a persistent groin injury and other minor muscular problems.

He cut a frustrated figure during Chelsea's win against Brentford last weekend.

Even after scoring from the penalty spot, the England star's celebrations were muted and questions were raised about his body language.

Rosenior (right), however, has quashed such talk regarding Chelsea's talisman and, while admitting he was frustrated against Brentford, said he is a big part of the club's future.

"I have had numerous conversations with Cole and he

seems very, very happy to be here," said Blues head coach Rosenior.

"He's a huge part of our plans in the long term. Every player goes through difficult moments in their careers in terms of injury. I don't think it is a reflection on his qualities.

"He's an outstanding footballer, but my job and the club's job is to get him in a place where he can consistently perform at the level that he wants to.

"And there was frustration in the Brentford game, not because he wasn't happy here, just because he

couldn't perform. He was in pain. He couldn't perform to the level he wanted to do for the club.

"He's a great kid and he's an outstanding player, but we have to make sure that we look after him in the right way.

"That's why I didn't involve him in the last game [against Pafos on Wednesday]."

Palmer trained yesterday afternoon with the rest of the Chelsea squad as they continued their preparations for a trip down to south London to take on Crystal Palace.

It has been a tumultuous week at Selhurst Park following manager Oliver Glasner announcing he will be leaving at the end of the season, Marc Guehi joining Manchester City and continued speculation over Jean-Philippe Mateta's future.

Despite this, Rosenior refused to view it as a good time to take on the Eagles.

"I think it can be reported in that way," said Rosenior. "What I do know is they're an outstanding team. Selhurst Park is, for me, one of the most difficult places to go in the Premier League. You have to be ready for a physical battle.

"The atmosphere in the stadium is going to be red hot, so we're not taking the game lightly at all."



EMOTIONAL OLIVER HAS NO REGRETS

BY **RACHEL STEINBERG**

OLIVER Glasner does not regret his outburst after Crystal Palace's loss to Sunderland but insisted "everything is cleared" with chairman Steve Parish.

The Eagles boss said his side felt "abandoned" following their first match without Marc Guehi, shortly before



the defender finalised a move to Manchester City.

Glasner also revealed the club have not received a transfer request from Jean-Philippe Mateta, nor any bids.

"No, I don't regret it," said Glasner. "Do I think it was the best way? No, I don't. "I think it's also a part of what

we achieved together, that I'm that emotional. It helps create the spirit, that togetherness, that belief. Sometimes maybe it's not the best way, but that's me."

Glasner said he had a "very long dinner" with Parish, one he felt was a "very, very good talk for both of us", though added "nothing changed" about his decision to leave at the end of the season.

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AFCON FINALISTS BOOST BLACK CATS

REGIS LE BRIS is hopeful returning Africa Cup of Nations duo Habib Diarra and Chemsdine Talbi can be available for Sunderland's trip to West Ham.

Despite missing the final due to suspension, Diarra (right) returns to the Black Cats as a champion after Senegal beat Morocco last weekend, where Talbi was an unused sub for the runners-up, and Le Bris revealed both may be involved today.

He said: "Habib only [returned to training]

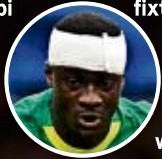
today, so the check-up is still ongoing. They could be available for the next fixture."

Diarra's return is a particular boost after the summer arrival's impact was cut short only four games into the Premier League campaign due to a groin injury.

Speaking about Diarra, Le Bris said: "We were in the dressing room and he spoke about this final, he was happy."

"He reminded us how pleased he was to be supported by the club."

"It's a connection. When they come back, they will have good energy, positive vibes, and it will be important for the next period."



WEST HAM V SUNDERLAND

Premier League: KO 12.30pm

BY JASON MELLOR

TATY CASTELLANOS insists West Ham have not had their Premier League chips just yet.

And the chess-loving Argentina forward is ready to follow in the footsteps of compatriots Carlos Tevez and Javier Mascherano to help the struggling Hammers pull-off an unlikely checkmate on their relegation rivals.

Castellanos has made an instant impact since a £26million move from Lazio

this month – finding the net to help seal a first win in 11 games in the FA Cup against QPR, as two of his first three appearances have ended in victory to help lift the mood at the London Stadium.

South American duo Tevez (below) and Mascherano (right) played prominent roles in a successful battle against relegation 19 years ago.

Tevez's Old Trafford winner against Manchester United sealed a dramatic final-day escape to condemn Neil Warnock's Sheffield United to the Championship.

The Hammers are five points adrift of safety but Castellanos is confident Nuno Espirito Santos' class of '26 can repeat the Houdini act, and the 27-year-old striker said: "As a child growing up in Argentina I'd watch football

all the time. I'd get up early in the morning when the Premier League was on TV.

"That's when I first learnt about West Ham because I watched a lot of Carlos Tevez and Javier Mascherano. To be here now where they played is truly a dream come true.

"I'm confident I've got a lot to offer as we fight to climb the table.

"I'm a positive person and I'm determined to live up to expectations. I came here to help us get in the best possible shape and to contribute what I can. This club doesn't deserve to be in this situation but we're up for the fight.

"It's not even been three weeks since I signed, but a lot has happened and I've loved every second so far."

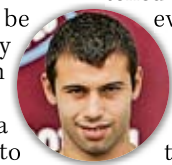
There are not too

many fellow chess lovers in the West Ham dressing room but the striker has thrown down the gauntlet to those who are.

Castellanos – who was christened Valentin but is known by everyone as Taty – added: "Chess is one of my main hobbies and I think I'm pretty good so I'm looking forward to taking on some of my new team-mates.

"It's great to be in London. I feel comfortable here already and everyone has made me feel very welcome. It's a little bit cold at the moment but so far there are similarities to New York.

"My girlfriend and my two dogs have arrived here now, and we're all delighted to be here. We've been to London on vacation before and it's exciting to be able to call this city our home now."



I CAN MATCH GRAND MASTER CARLOS

Taty wants to be Hammers' knight in shining armour



OPENING MOVE
The chess-loving Castellanos has made a big Hammers impact

★ Trustpilot

★★★★★
Rated Excellent





HULL v SWANSEA

Championship: KO 3pm

DOWELL IN FOR SERG TO THE TOP



KIERAN DOWELL is pushing for his Hull debut after signing from Rangers.

The former Norwich midfielder (above) has joined on an 18-month deal in a boost to the injury-hit Tigers' promotion hopes.

Fourth-placed City are targeting a seventh win in nine at home to Swansea and boss Sergej Jakirovic said: "It's a good bit of business for us.

"Any player that has the Championship experience Kieran has is very important for our group. He's a good player with a good profile and I hope he can come in and improve our team."

Defender Paddy McNair and defensive midfielder Toby Collyer are both set to sign for the Tigers to help cover the loss of Semi Ajayi, who is out until March.

Jakirovic, who has striker Kyle Joseph back from an ankle issue, added: "It gives us more options. We seem to be losing players after every game at present."

Swansea have injury problems of their own as they go in search of a fourth win in six Championship games to pull them further away from relegation danger.

Zeidane Inoussa is out with a back injury that could see the Swedish winger sidelined for a lengthy period.

Northern Ireland midfielder Ethan Galbraith is a doubt with a knee problem and manager Vitor Matos said: "Ethan is being assessed by the medical team and we'll wait and see how he is."

BIRMINGHAM v STOKE

Championship: KO 3pm

DAVIES NOT READY TO RISK PRISKE



BIRMINGHAM fans have been warned not to expect too much too soon from August Priske.

Blues shelled out £6m to hold off strong competition from across Europe for the Djurgardens striker, who topped the Swedish goal charts last season.

Cautious boss Chris Davies insists the 21-year-old is one for the future rather than the here and now after pleading with supporters not to put too much pressure on the January recruit.

City are looking to make it five unbeaten at home to Stoke. Denmark Under-21s international Priske (above) will be on the bench at best and Davies said: "He's not going to come in and blow the Championship away.

"There were some pretty good European clubs interested in him, so we did really well to attract him here.

"He's 6ft 3, can hold the ball up, he's got a good touch, is good in the air and he can finish. We've signed him on a long-term contract because we really believe he can grow with the club."

Stoke are looking to complete a league double over the Blues after Mark Robins' men sealed victory with the only goal when the sides met in September.

The Potters are aiming for a third straight away win but have 11 players out.

Boss Robins said: "I've never seen circumstances like it in terms of injuries."

WHAT THE HECK

Paul Heckingbottom (inset) is stunned by Milutin Osmajic's red card



MIDDLESBROUGH v PRESTON

Championship: KO 12.30pm, Sky

PAUL HECKINGBOTTOM would not blame Preston supporters for wanting to show Milutin Osmajic the door.

North End's Montenegro forward starts a three-match ban after adding to a lengthy rap sheet following his red card for head-butting Hull midfielder John Lundstram (right) in the midweek defeat to the Tigers.

Osmajic has now been suspended for 20 games in the last 16 months, after he had to sit out nine for racially abusing Burnley's Hannibal Mejbri last year and eight for biting Blackburn's Owen Beck in September 2024.

Many fans reckon the six-goal striker isn't worth the trouble and want him shipped out.

Boss Heckingbottom said: "I spoke to him after the game but I've not spoken to him since. It makes my job more difficult because we've not got him for three games."

When asked if he understands Preston fans who stood by the player but are now done with the 26-year-old, Heckingbottom said: "Yeah."

The Deepdale side face a tough



NO IFS, BUTTS OR MAYBES

Fan fury at Osmajic is fair says boss

trip to second-place Middlesbrough today as they look to halt a run of three straight defeats that has dented their hopes of a top-two finish.

Preston are yet to make a January signing and Heckingbottom added: "It's a huge few days until the window closes. It's so important for us, so it's going to be a real push.

"No matter where you are, every window is a chance to get better and improve. If you aren't coming out of it in a better position, then you're failing."

Boro hope to keep the pressure on leaders Coventry with a fourth straight league win to help fend off

the challenge from in-form Ipswich and Hull for the second automatic promotion spot.

Frank Lampard's Sky Blues face a trip to Norwich on Monday, so the Teessiders can cut their lead to three points.

Alan Browne, a former North Ender, is happy to fill in at right-back following an injury to Callum Brittain after the 30-year-old Irishman weighed-in with a goal and assist in the 2-1 comeback win at Stoke in midweek.

The on-loan Sunderland midfielder hopes to seal back-to-back promotions after helping the

Black Cats into the Premier League last season.

He said: "I want to get back in the middle, that's where I'm best and want to play, but I'm happy to do a job for the team wherever that may be.

"Although you're playing full-back, you find yourself in some really good areas. I'm learning and hopefully improving by the week.

"We've got a really good team. We've had a couple of bad patches this season but we never went under, we stuck together and put things right.

"Hopefully we can go all the way."

SHEFFIELD UNITED v IPSWICH

Championship: KO 3pm

KIERAN WARY OF WILDER'S SHARPER BLADES

KIERAN McKENNA won't let the Championship table fool him into thinking Ipswich will be on easy street against Sheffield United.

The Tractor Boys cut down the Blades 5-0 at Portman Road in September and the sides are separated by 18 points going into the Bramall Lane rematch.

Despite them sitting just four points off the drop zone, the Town boss reckons that

under Chris Wilder United are a different proposition to the side humiliated in Suffolk on the way to losing the first seven games under ex-boss Ruben Selles.

In-form Ipswich can cut the gap to leaders Coventry to five points with a sixth straight win, and McKenna (left) said: "There's no doubt that

Sheffield United are in a completely false position, because of the start they had

to the season. If you'd started the table in October, they'd probably be in the top three.

"By any metric from the middle of autumn onwards, they're thereabouts with anyone at the top of the league in terms of points gathered, but also in performances.

"We know we're coming up against a top Championship side. They've been one of the top band of teams in the

division for a few months now and it's not hard to understand why.

"They've got a really good manager, a big connection with the fans and a top squad with strength in depth."

The Blades are looking to avoid a fourth straight defeat to climb away from danger and Wilder said: "We know that we've got to start converting the chances we're making."



TAYL OF TWO CITIES

Keane edge to big derby clash

PORTSMOUTH v SOUTHAMPTON

Championship: Tomorrow, 12pm, Sky

TAYLOR HARWOOD-BELLIS has a long way to go to match the footballing achievements of his famous father-in-law to be.

But the Southampton defender reckons he could teach Roy Keane a thing or two about a bitter rivalry the Irishman never got the chance to taste for himself.

Harwood-Bellis is engaged to Keane's daughter Leah and ahead of tomorrow's sell-out derby trip to Portsmouth he said: "There's always a bit of football chat when we meet up. There's no better person to ask in terms of big moments."

"Saying that, he's never experienced the Portsmouth-Southampton derby, so I'll let him know how it goes!"

Saints romped to a 4-0 EFL Cup win on their last visit to Fratton Park in 2019 – but it's almost 50 years since they returned with maximum points.

The rivals fought out a St Mary's stalemate in September and ex-Burnley and Anderlecht loan defender Harwood-Bellis added: "At the start of the season it was the fixture you wanted to know the date of."

"It's all you hear about in the city and the result last time wasn't one we wanted. Hopefully we can get three points and give the fans something to

go home happy with. I've been on the good end of derby wins at Burnley and Anderlecht.

"Fans don't forget. It's sung about for years afterwards, so to get our names in the history books would be incredible."

The midweek victory over Sheffield United was the mid-table Saints' first in eight in the league to ease the pressure on rookie boss Tonda Eckert.

Harwood-Bellis admits Saints haven't been good enough this season as they play catch-up after Will Still's disastrous five-month reign.

He added: "We're nowhere near where we want to be. We set ourselves much higher standards. Two wins in a week can change the season."

"Hopefully that will be a good springboard to finish strongly and put the club back where it should be."

Keshi Anderson is in line for a baptism of fire, with the former Birmingham winger pushing to make his Portsmouth debut.

Relegation-threatened Pompey are a point above the drop zone and have abandoned a transfer policy based on youth for more seasoned 'dogs of war' signings like Anderson, along with Ebou Adams and Millen Ali.

Boss John Mousinho said: "We have a pragmatic short-term focus. It's about staying in the Championship, which means bringing players in who can affect us the next three months."

FAMILY GUYS
Southampton's Taylor Harwood-Bellis and (below) Roy Keane



CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND-UP



ROBINS STAR FLIES THE NEST

BRISTOL CITY start life without Anis Mehmeti (left) after the nine-goal forward's £3m move to promotion rivals IPSWICH.

The Robins haven't scored in their last three Championship games as they host bottom club SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY, who are on a 21-game winless run.

BLACKBURN have called on fans to shelve a planned boycott of the home game with play-off-chasing WATFORD in protest at

the way the club is being run. Rovers are third bottom after one win in 13 and a club statement said: "We recognise the strength of feeling among sections of the fanbase."

"We urge all Rovers supporters to show unity and support the team."

CHARLTON are out to end 30 years of hurt against South London rivals MILLWALL, who they haven't beaten in the last 13

league meetings stretching back to March 1996.

WREXHAM visit play-off rivals QPR looking to avenge a 3-1 defeat at the Racecourse Ground in September.

Boss Phil Parkinson said: "We're a stronger team since that day."

Matt Bloomfield goes in search of his first goal and first win after two stalemates to start his reign as his OXFORD side travel to LEICESTER.

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LEAGUE ONE

LEAGUE ONE ROUND-UP

NEW MANN IS RARING TO GO



NEW HUDDERSFIELD boss Liam Manning insists he's relishing the challenge as he takes charge for the first time in the derby clash with BRADFORD.

The former Bristol City boss (above) said: "There's no reason why this team can't go on a run of results to get to where we want."

Graham Alexander isn't afraid to show more players the door after five departures already this month and the Bantams boss said: "I know where I want to take the group."

"It's up to the players to show us that they're good enough."

Kasey Palmer is looking forward to getting back to the school run after joining LUTON on loan for the rest of the season.

The Jamaica midfielder admits things haven't worked out for him at Hull and ahead of his Hatters debut at PLYMOUTH the Lewisham-born 29-year-old said: "It's been difficult not playing and being so far from home."

"I've got the opportunity to come and live at home,

be around the family, do the school run and hopefully start enjoying my football."

"Living so far away, not seeing the kids and family, has been difficult, so I'm buzzing to get back home."

LEYTON ORIENT travel to BOLTON looking to avoid a fifth straight away defeat and defender Jack Simpson said: "We have to go there and be aggressive."

CARDIFF can make an early move in a 12.30 start against STOCKPORT.

LEAGUE ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cardiff	26	17	4	5	45	26	55
Lincoln City	27	15	7	5	44	29	52
Bradford	25	13	7	5	35	27	46
Stockport City	26	13	6	7	37	32	45
Bolton	27	11	10	6	33	25	43
Huddersfield	27	11	6	10	46	38	39
Luton	26	11	6	9	37	32	39
Stevenage	25	10	8	7	27	23	38
Wycombe	26	9	9	8	34	29	36
Mansfield	24	10	5	9	34	28	35
Reading	25	9	8	8	33	31	35
Peterborough	26	11	2	13	33	35	35
Exeter	25	10	3	12	28	23	33
Plymouth	26	10	3	13	33	39	33
Barnsley	22	9	5	8	35	34	32
Leyton Orient	26	9	5	12	39	43	32
AFC Wimbledon	25	9	4	12	27	34	31
Wigan	25	7	9	9	26	28	30
Burton Albion	26	8	6	12	27	37	30
Blackpool	26	8	5	13	32	39	29
Northampton	25	8	5	12	23	30	29
Doncaster	25	7	5	13	25	41	26
Rotherham	25	6	6	13	24	38	24
Port Vale	24	4	6	14	18	34	18

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LEAGUE TWO

LEAGUE TWO ROUND-UP

SCOTT A LONG WAY TO DRIVE



SCOTT LINDSEY has been digging out a map as his CRAWLEY side look to end a 12-match winless streak when they make the 650-mile round trip to BARROW.

The 53-year-old (above) said: "It's tough because of the length of the journey, it's a long, long way, isn't it? We won't make any excuses and I say, 'Bring it on.'"

BROMLEY could increase their six-point lead at the top by extending their eight-game unbeaten run at home to second-placed SWINDON.

TRANMERE visit promotion-chasing CAMBRIDGE 10 points adrift of the play-offs after just three wins in nine and striker Connor Jennings said: "I don't think the club has ever wanted to be where it is now and I'm sure the fans don't either."

"We are underachieving by quite a distance."

Yusuf Akhamrich is set for his BRISTOL ROVERS debut against SALFORD after joining on loan from Spurs to become Rovers' fifth January

signing. The 20-year-old centre-back said: "I'm buzzing to be here."

Gareth Ainsworth can't wait for the end of the January transfer window.

Before the trip to second-bottom HARROGATE, the GILLINGHAM boss said: "It's a mental time. I'm a big believer that if you sign too many players this month, then you've got it wrong in the summer."

"I'll love it when the window closes and all the noise stops."

LEAGUE TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bromley	26	15	7	4	44	27	52
Swindon	25	14	4	7	41	29	46
Walsall	25	14	4	7	35	24	46
Salford City	25	14	4	7	38	33	46
MK Dons	26	12	8	6	48	28	44
Cambridge Utd	25	12	8	5	30	20	44
Notts County	25	12	6	7	38	27	42
Chesterfield	26	10	11	5	42	35	41
Colchester	25	10	9	6	39	28	39
Crewe	26	11	6	9	42	34	39
Grimsby	25	10	7	8	36	30	37
Oldham	25	8	11	6	26	20	35
Barnet	25	9	8	8	32	27	35
Gillingham	25	8	11	6	34	30	35
Fleetwood	25	9	7	9	33	32	34
Acc Stanley	25	9	6	10	27	28	33
Tranmere	26	8	10	40	42	32	32
Cheltenham	26	9	3	14	26	43	30
Barrow	25	6	13	27	38	24	24
Shrewsbury	25	5	7	13	22	41	22
Bristol Rovers	25	6	3	16	21	45	21
Crawley Town	26	4	7	15	29	47	19
Harrogate	26	4	6	16	19	41	18
Newport Co	25	4	5	16	26	46	17

YOUR WEEKEND GUIDE TO THE PREM

ARSENAL v MANCHESTER UNITED

Tomorrow 4.30pm, Sky Sports

MICHAEL CARRICK admits Manchester United must use last week's win over Manchester City as a catalyst for their season.

United beat rivals City 2-0 at Old Trafford and now make the trip to the Emirates to take on leaders Arsenal and boss Mikel Arteta (inset).

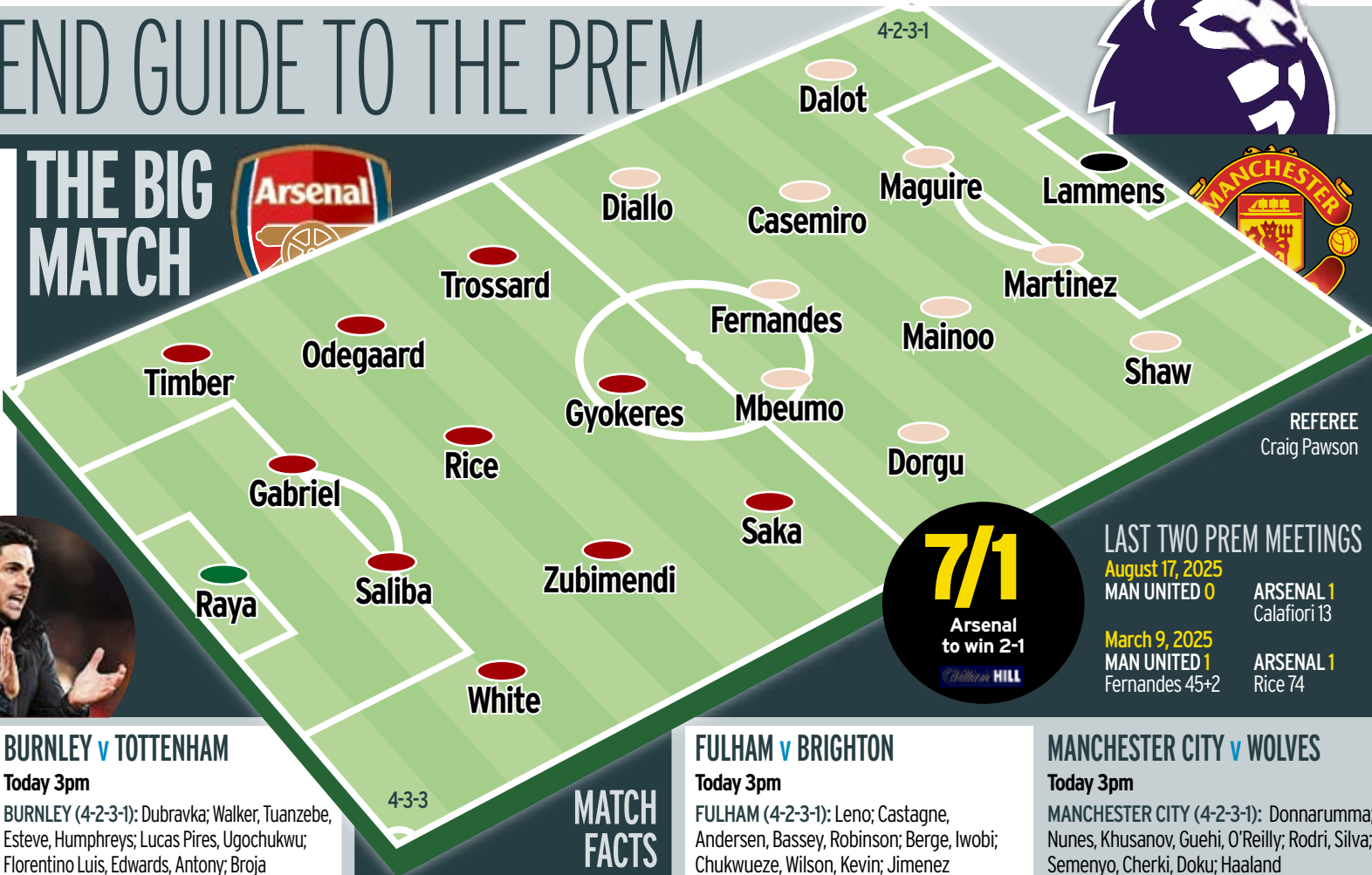
Victory over City came in Carrick's first game as United boss and the former midfielder has urged his team to keep getting better.

He said: "One game doesn't make you a great team, but it gives us a great foundation to build on."

"There is a lot of confidence in the group, but we know what's coming."



THE BIG MATCH



7/1

Arsenal to win 2-1

LAST TWO PREM MEETINGS

August 17, 2025	MAN UNITED 0	ARSENAL 1
		Calafiori 13
March 9, 2025	MAN UNITED 1	ARSENAL 1
	Fernandes 45+2	Rice 74

WEST HAM v SUNDERLAND

Today 12.30pm, TNT Sports

WEST HAM (4-4-1-1): Areola; Wan-Bissaka, Todibo, Mavropanos, Scarles; Bowen, Fernandes, Soucek, Summerville; Pablo; Castellanos

SUNDERLAND (4-2-3-1): Roefs; Mukiele, Ballard, Alderete, Reinildo; Sadiki, Xhaka; Hume, Le Fee, Adingra; Brobbey

REFEREE: Thomas Bramall

1 West Ham have lost just one of their last 12 Prem home games against Sunderland (W9 D2).

Sunderland to win: 19/10

BURNLEY v TOTTENHAM

Today 3pm

BURNLEY (4-2-3-1): Dubravka; Walker, Tuanzebe, Esteve, Humphreys; Lucas Pires, Ugochukwu; Florentino Luis, Edwards, Antony; Broja

TOTTENHAM (4-2-3-1): Vicario; Porro, Romero, Van de Ven, Spence; Gallagher, Bissouma; Odobert, Xavi, Tel; Solanke

REFEREE: Peter Bankes

6 Burnley have lost six of their last seven Premier League games against Tottenham.

Burnley to win: 13/5

BOURNEMOUTH v LIVERPOOL

Tonight 5.30pm, Sky Sports

BOURNEMOUTH (4-2-3-1): Petrovic; Smith, Hill, Senesi, Truffert; Scott, Cook; Jimenez, Kroupi, Adli; Evanilson

LIVERPOOL (4-2-3-1): Alisson; Frimpong, Gomez, Van Dijk, Kerkez; Gravenberch, Jones; Salah, Szoboszlai, Wirtz; Ekitike

REFEREE: Michael Salisbury

52 Bournemouth have conceded 52 goals in their 17 Premier League games against Liverpool.

Liverpool to win: 17/20

BRENTFORD v N FOREST

Tomorrow 2pm, Sky Sports

BRENTFORD (4-2-3-1): Kelleher; Kayode, Collins, Ajer, Henry; Janelt, Yarmoliuk; Ouattara, Damsgaard, Schade; Thiago

FOREST (4-2-3-1): Sels; Aina, Milenkovic, Murillo, Williams; Sangare, Anderson; Hutchinson, Gibbs-White, Hudson-Odoi; Awoniyi

REFEREE: Sam Barrott

11 No team has failed to score in more different Prem games than Forest this season (11).

Nottingham Forest to win: 3/1

MATCH FACTS

4 Arsenal have won each of their last four Premier League home games against Man United, the longest home winning run against them by any side in the competition.

6 Man United are winless in their last six Premier League games against Arsenal (D1 L5) - they've never gone seven in a row without a win against the Gunners in their league history.



1st Michael Carrick's first and only Prem victory in his previous stint as Man United manager came against Mikel Arteta's Arsenal - a 3-2 win at Old Trafford in December 2021.

FULHAM v BRIGHTON

Today 3pm

FULHAM (4-2-3-1): Leno; Castagne, Andersen, Bassey, Robinson; Berge, Iwobi; Chukwueze, Wilson, Kevin; Jimenez

BRIGHTON (4-3-3): Verbruggen; Veltman, van Hecke, Dunk, Kadioglu; Gross, Baleba, Gomez; Gruda, Welbeck, Mitoma

REFEREE: Michael Oliver

5 Fulham are unbeaten in all five of their Premier League home games against Brighton (W4 D1).

Brighton to win: 7/4

MANCHESTER CITY v WOLVES

Today 3pm

MANCHESTER CITY (4-2-3-1): Donnarumma; Nunes, Khusanov, Guehi, O'Reilly; Rodri, Silva; Semenyo, Cherki, Doku; Haaland

WOLVES (3-5-2): Sa; Mosquera, S Bueno, Krejci; Tchatchoua, J Gomes, Andre, Mane, H Bueno; Arokodare, Hwang

REFEREE: Farai Hallam

10 Manchester City have won 10 of their last 11 Premier League games against Wolves.

Wolves to win: 10/1

CRYSTAL PALACE v CHELSEA

Tomorrow 2pm, Sky Sports

CRYSTAL PALACE (4-3-3): Henderson; Richards, Lacroix, Lerma; Devenny, Wharton, Hughes, Mitchell; Sarr, Pino; Mateta

CHELSEA (4-2-3-1): Sanchez; James, Chalobah, Badiashile, Cucurella; Caicedo, Fernandez; Estevao, Palmer, Neto; Joao Pedro

REFEREE: Darren England

16 Crystal Palace are winless in their last 16 Premier League games against Chelsea.

Crystal Palace to win: 12/5

NEWCASTLE v ASTON VILLA

Tomorrow 2pm, Sky Sports

NEWCASTLE (4-3-3): Pope; Trippier, Thiaw, Botman, Hall; Miley, Tonali, Joelinton; Barnes, Wissa, Gordon

ASTON VILLA (4-2-3-1): Bizot; Cash, Konsa, Torres, Maatsen; Tielemans, Onana; Sancho, Rogers, Buendia; Watkins

REFEREE: Jarred Gillett

17 Newcastle are unbeaten in their last 17 home league games against Aston Villa (W10 D6).

Draw: 13/5

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